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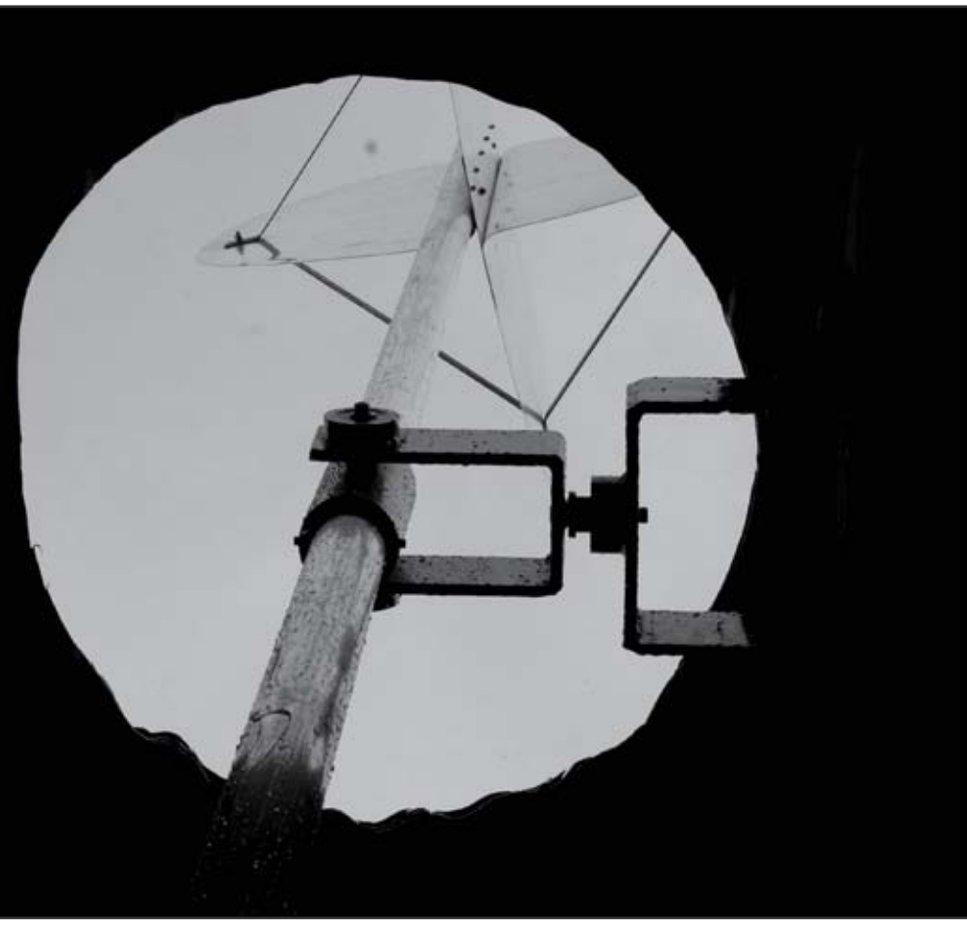

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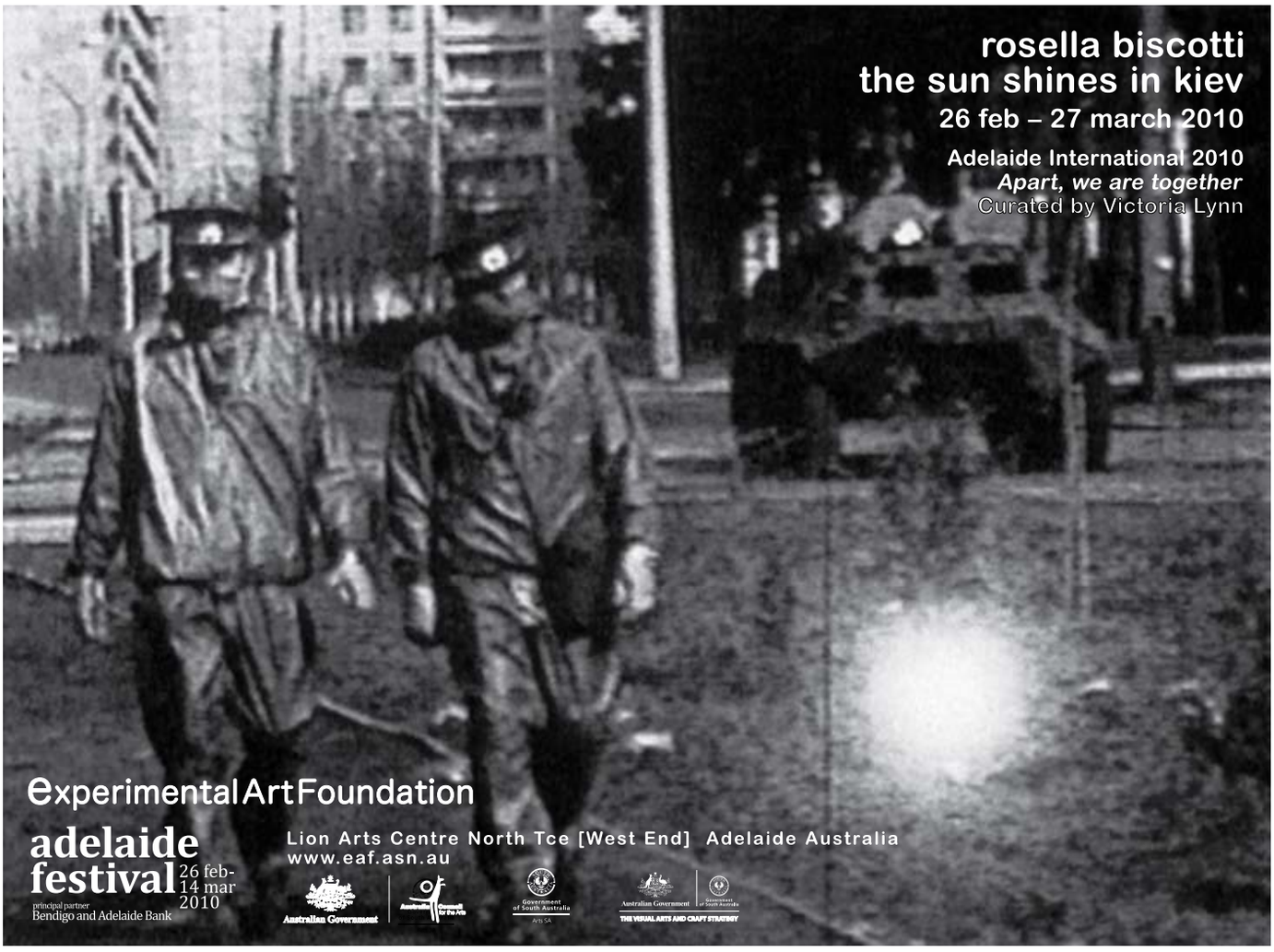

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Qui après A?

Liv Barrett

B: I wanted to make a film that showed how sad and lyrical it is for those two old ladies to be living in those rooms full of newspapers and cats.
A: You shouldn't make it sad. You should just say, 'This is how people today are doing things'.[1]

Where things end up: Arthur Rimbaud wrote poems about little lovers and memory and eternity and he ended up dealing weapons to feed a war in Abyssinia. L ended up in the sticky jungles of Papua New Guinea reading Rimbaud's poems; mosquitoes and little lovers and memory always close by. Months later L and my friend would end up in the same country, in a different jungle, in a plane that would crash into a mountain as it ascended towards the sky. People should keep investigating the origins of things if they want answers because there is no way of ever knowing where things will end up.

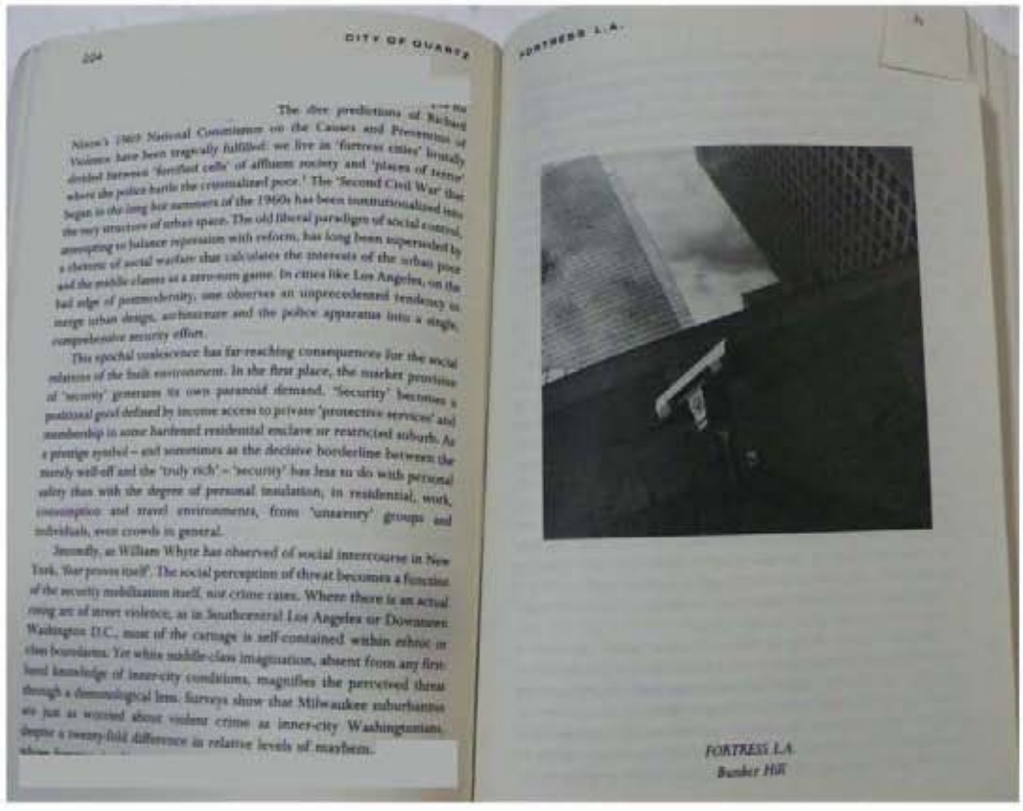
The Coming Insurrection ended up on Glenn Beck's program on the Fox News network. A small, neatly designed text that responded to the riots that burned like spot fires over Europe in 2005, *The Coming Insurrection* would have only expected a contained audience of people versed in the literature of radical change when it went to print. But Glenn Beck has a regular audience in the United States of more than two million Americans and online sales of the book increased sharply as Beck compelled his audience to 'read this book', affecting the same kind of logic of Sun Tzu in *The Art of War*: 'know your enemy and know yourself'.

Airport-ness and hotel-ness: in airports vaporised fragrances puff out of glass and plastic bottles to cover clothes and skin with unfamiliar smells, to disorient the most ineffable of the senses, so that when every item we are carrying with us is put under a screen that penetrates surfaces to expose contents, at least as humans we are concealed under misleading indicators of who we usually are, what we usually smell like. And so we can pass through the halls of airports with the ease that comes from people not recognising us, and from every moment when we breathe in the scent we're carrying we momentarily fail to recognise ourselves. The perfume testers on the shelves of duty-free shops are really testing what it is like to smell like another person's choices.

Working in a hotel, a maid is witness to the laziness people grant themselves when they have the temporary service of an anonymous cleaner. A regular house-cleaner is quite different and people will often prepare the house for their arrival, because these cleaners have the opportunity to aggregate the detritus left behind in the house each week or month by the people who live there and from this they can form an image of them by the things they hide and what they discard. Maybe this is the best way to know somebody, by the waste they produce. Cleaners take a negative imprint of an image rather than the positive one, like Seth Price's flat wall sculptures that are formed from the space around an image of human contact, they're made up of the excess that occurs at the edges of the focus of the image. In these works, what is usually discarded from a picture becomes the imprint that we're left with. It is a straightforward inversion of how the mind has been encouraged to look at things, just like the cleaner or maid who sees what we choose to hide from others. I love the emptiness of Seth Price's sculptures like I love the possibilities of nothing said, closed eyes, clean paper, no music and empty rooms. Andy Warhol was prolific in his production of objects and images, yet:

> When I look at things, I always see the space they occupy. I always want the space to reappear, to make a comeback, because it's lost space when there's something in it. If I see a chair in a beautiful space, no matter how beautiful the chair is, it can never be as beautiful to me as the plain space.[2]

In an American airport I caught a fragment of a sentence spoken by a child being pushed on an aluminium trolley. He was explaining the concept of a new television program to his mother, where people are filmed 'doing foolish things'. It is more difficult to think of things that people do that couldn't be included in this description, rather than things that could. A continuum of time seems to be composed of a series of things that could be defined as foolish (because until we have acted we never really know), punctuated by moments where the foolishness lends itself to some kind of unpredictable productivity, and this is unsurprising when you consider that the world is predicated on mistakes of an astral scale of colliding substances and so foolishness and collisions are rewarded because they invite possibilities without even knowing what they are inviting. But not always.



204 CITY OF QUARTZ

The dire predictions of Richard Nixon's 1969 National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence have been tragically fulfilled: we live in 'fortress cities' brutally divided between 'fortified cells' of affluent society and 'places of terror' where the police battle the criminalized poor.[1] The 'Second Civil War' that began in the long hot summers of the 1960s has been institutionalized into the very structure of urban space. The old liberal paradigm of social control, attempting to balance repression with reform, has long been superseded by a rhetoric of social warfare that calculates the interests of the urban poor and the middle classes as a zero-sum game. In cities like Los Angeles, on the bad edge of postmodernity, one observes an unprecedented tendency to merge urban design, architecture and the police apparatus into a single, comprehensive security effort.

This epochal coalescence has far-reaching consequences for the social relations of the built environment. In the first place, the market provision of 'security' generates its own paranoid demand. 'Security' becomes a positional good defined by income access to private 'protective services' and membership in some hardened residential enclave or restricted suburb. As a prestige symbol – and sometimes as the decisive borderline between the merely well-off and the 'truly rich' – 'security' has less to do with personal safety than with the degree of personal insulation, in residential, work, consumption and travel environments, from 'unsavory' groups and individuals, even crowds in general.

Secondly, as William Whyte has observed of social intercourse in New York, 'fear proves itself'. The social perception of threat becomes a function of the security mobilization itself, not crime rates. Where there is an actual rising arc of street violence, as in Southcentral Los Angeles or Downtown Washington D.C., most of the carnage is self-contained within ethnic or class boundaries. Yet white middle-class imagination, absent from any first-hand knowledge of inner-city conditions, magnifies the perceived threat through a demonological lens. Surveys show that Milwaukee suburbanites are just as worried about violent crime as inner-city Washingtonians, despite a twenty-fold difference in relative levels of mayhem.

FORTRESS L.A.

FORTRESS L.A.
Bunker Hill

Reading a city: Being in LA has the vertiginous effect on the mind of constantly re-reading texts that exist within memory. It is the number and density of texts that involuntarily offer themselves as layers and filters over the city as it is spread out in front of you, so that almost every experience confirms the city's cultural mythology embedded in novels, film, television, music and non-fiction, and reconstituted in the individual mind by the very personal processes with which we place all these components together. Richard Lehan suggests that 'probably no other city in the western world has a more negative image',[3] but no other city in the world is composed of as many images, or reliant on the image to provide its existence, so this mass of negativity may be inevitable because of a more general mass. (People typically say that hate comes from a lack of understanding, but only with each piece of perceived information can hate become more fully formed, so when people hate Los Angeles they have the opportunity to do it with abundance.)

CNN reported for days on Michael Jackson's death on top of their Sunset and Cahuenga headquarters, with a backdrop of the Hollywood sign as precisely dictated as though it was a feature film. (The news is also a story.) Ever since Andy Warhol printed and reprinted flat images of people's faces, the human face has had the potential to be devoid of human content. Inversely, an object like the Hollywood sign no longer only resides in the world of objects, it is a container for countless streams of human sadness that run straight into it.

M gave me *Less Than Zero* and while I was reading in the strangling heat on the street where the narrator of the novel attempts to live, I was warned: 'Don't read that book while you're in LA, it won't help'. Because the characters are inoculated against the heaviness they are written within, it is easy to read it with this same nonchalance. No real repulsion stayed with me after I'd finished the book although it was filled with a kind of decadent and revolting nothingness — but for days I was wondering why *snuff* is such a cute sounding word.

At 8pm the city turns into a Michael Mann film. This lasts until a more pure darkness washes the purple glaze away.

The hills that barricade Los Angeles form a geographical trope for all that is trapped there, all that you are able to sense but not touch. In this way they are both alluring and terrifying because they present infinite hallucinatory possibilities, but also the finite limitations of physical expansion. There is nowhere else to go except deeper into the hostile desert. Every time a movie is produced in Los Angeles a new pocket of space appears, yet this kind of space does not necessarily allow more oxygen to flow to the other. Agoraphobia and claustrophobia are almost interchangeable within this context. As I was becoming aware of the capabilities of the hills to terrify anyone placed between them and the Pacific Ocean, the terror became literal and fires began to burn in Altadena and Sierra Madre and beyond. Like everything else that has an argument for existence in the city, the fires could be watched from a relative distance.

In his thesis on how LA emerged from arid nothingness in *City of Quartz,* Mike Davis describes the overspill into the San Fernando Valley and how this leads to a condition where urbanity eats up the desert. The interplay between fictitious and verified events in *City of Quartz* confirms that any separation of these two co-dependent elements would untie the very substance of the city. The book could be read as a deeply researched reference to provide the compelling narrative of Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* with a historically accurate framework. Property developer and billionaire Eli Broad is written about in the book as one of the definitive sculptors of Los Angeles — its geography, its demography and its psychography. His development of dry and open space into inhabited urbanity and sub-urbanity dictates the flow of life of the city's inhabitants, most significantly the middle-class urban sprawl and the notorious traffic jams. He is the city's greatest cultural philanthropist and yet the way he has engineered human movement through urban planning has structured the lives of millions of its inhabitants and almost ensures the rescinding potential for cultural vibrancy beyond established institutions. Little room is left for communal spaces as people travel from the privacy of their home to the relative seclusion of their workplaces, in the contained capsules of their automobiles. Yet Broad is currently perceived as the saviour of contemporary Los Angeles culture, after one swift endowment from his personal fortune saved the Museum of Contemporary Art from sinking into the quicksands of the Californian cultural desert.

It is difficult to infer that you exist in Los Angeles, which is why the studios are its real inhabitants. An individual's touch does not really correspond to the materiality of the city. Like cumulus clouds through an airplane window, there is an ambient beauty projected by a powerful and apparent force, but if you tried to touch it your hand would just fall through the air. Composed mostly of textures that are left over from visual and textual language, it is as though Los Angeles has an auteur and it is easy to conceive that if it were to vanish in one of its own apocalypse-narratives, it would continue to exist in the very same way for most people. The fluid receptacle for the dreams we cannot contain.

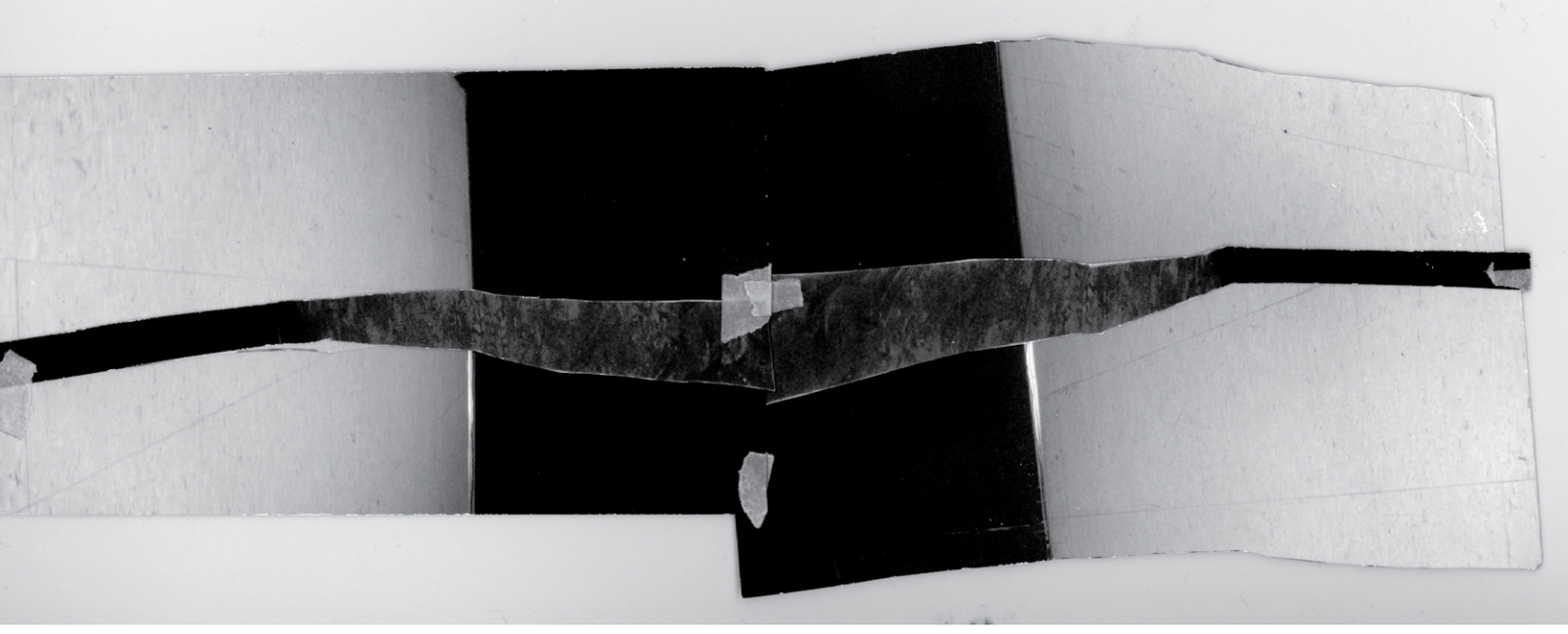
Endnotes

1 Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and back again),* Harcourt, New York: 1975.
2 Ibid.
3 David Fine, *Los Angeles in Fiction,* Albuquerque, 1984.

Image: Liv Barrett 2009

RENEE COSGRAVE

MERRYN LLOYD



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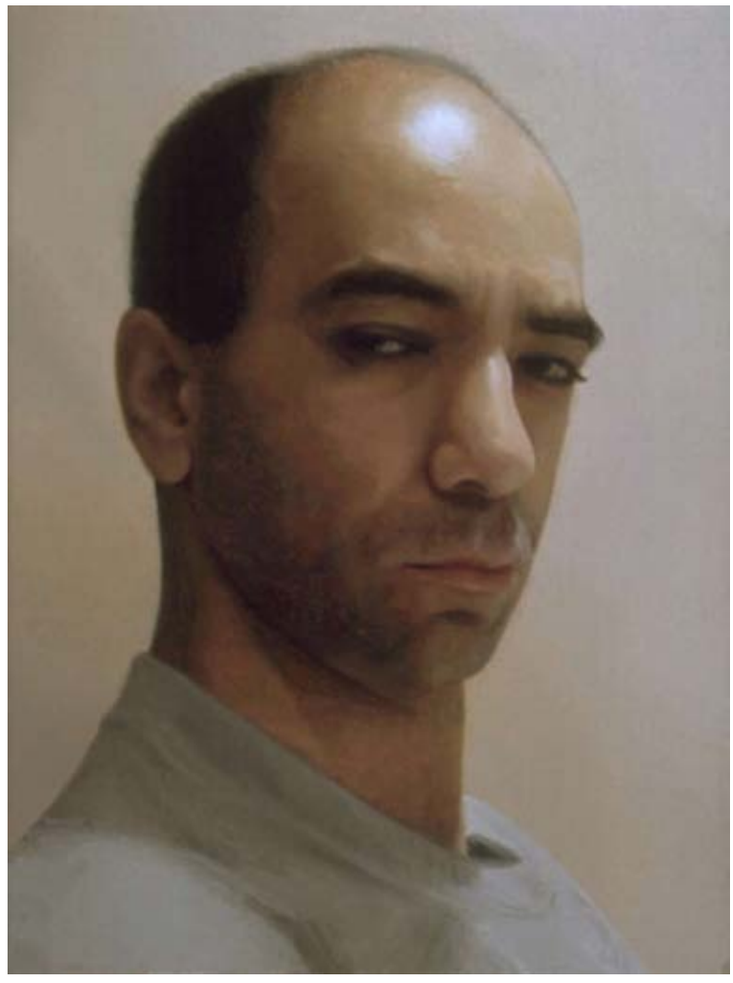
Mutlu Çerkez: 'Got a date, I can't be late'...[1]



Untitled 14 April 2023 2003

Francis Plagne

The body of work created by Mutlu Çerkez between 1987 and his death in 2005 is unified through one feature: in addition to the date on which the work was made, every piece bears another date, that of the date on which Çerkez planned to remake the work. Whether painting or poster, LP record or live beehive, every work was to be remade, although not necessarily in its original form. Through the unfailing use of this device his work was, from the beginning, explicitly presented as a lifework, an oeuvre following its own rules, with a core untouchable by any contingency that history might throw up.

To structure a body of work in advance in such a way that the only guarantee is its own repeated self-reference is certainly to ignore the advice of contemporary art and its theory and historiography, with its relational aesthetics, social dialogues and routine critiques of any individualistic focus: it is also an undeniably Duchampian gesture. For, although Duchamp's 'invention' of the readymade provided the groundwork on which estimable politically and socially conscious moments in twentieth century art (such as the institutional critique of Asher and Haacke) could be built, in his practice, Duchamp showed little interest in an engagement in social praxis, but rather focused on extending art into the realm of 'intellectual expression'[2] as an end in itself, considering his works to have been realised 'through a chain of totally subjective reactions'.[3] As the miniature reproductions of the readymades in the *Boîte-en-valise* make clear, the essence of Duchamp's work is not, as Peter Bürger argued in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, a mocking gesture directed at individual authorship and aiming to destroy the autonomy of the institution of art, but rather the creation of a labyrinthine, self-referential oeuvre.

One can hardly imagine an artist whose work would communicate a better understanding of this aspect of Duchamp's practice than Çerkez

free's / love / beauty & purity / creature of music / gracefully beautiful / love is the message / the world is yours / i have nature and i want to future / you have a great behind / follow the future / dream with joy / it's music / hate becomes love / special days / peace kissing / dancing / glorius future / more and too sure / love / beauty / girls are brighter than massive gold / reach for the stars / beautily / love / no words are necessary for real thing / for you the good thing with which you were filled with the heart is sent to you from us / sweet heart / message of love / the banner over us is love! / way following nature if it says how far / favorite than future / precious / tears love / broken heart / away with a thinking things do not always go well as we wish, but the problem is easy. / impossible is no reason not to do it / i'm going to let you do as you wish / love bravery action / smileing is happy / whatever does not kill me makes me stronger / beyond the beautiful experience / happily / love / we will always be together until the death tears us apart

Untitled: 23 February 2037 2005
Acrylic on paper, framed (detail)
83 x 64 cm

does. Nowhere is this more plainly visible than in his quartet of pieces from 2003, *Untitled: 10 November 2009*, *Untitled: 11 November 2009*, *Untitled: 14 November 2009* and *Untitled: 20 November 2009*, presented as a frieze wrapped around the walls of the gallery bearing the words of the titles painted white on black on canvas boards. This is a work emptied of all content except its double place in the artist's oeuvre as original and never realised remake, exemplifying the crystalline, minimal beauty and subtle humour which define the artist's work. One of the few pieces Çerkez lived to remake, *Untitled: 11 April 2003* (first made in 1988), deliberately emphasises that the essence of Çerkez's work lies in its overall form rather than in its specific content, or rather that its overall form is its content: while the original consisted of a coil of shaved wood resembling an apple peel affixed to a brown panel, the date painted in the corner, the remake does away with everything except the date, copied photo-realistically from the original work but enlarged to cover an entire canvas.

Of course, to make the structure of one's career the essential focus of one's work is to remove this structure from the sphere of latent assumption and force it into the light of conscious thought. Although Çerkez obsessed over the personalities of lone artistic geniuses, especially Duchamp, Picasso, De Chirico and Dalí (a personal canon which gives us an essential clue as to the way in which Çerkez was able to relate the self-referential structure of his work as a whole to the traditional self-portraiture he enthusiastically practiced), he refused to have his career as an artist subjected to the ingrained critical framework of artistic development through which the work of these masters is often viewed. Emerging fully formed with his double date system already in place at his first solo show at City Gallery in 1988 and never deviating from it in the seventeen following years was essential to Çerkez's plan and the commitment to reproduce his work at a later date, like De Chirico's famous late forgeries of his own early style,[4] radically complicated the possibility of registering any difference between the early and the late, juvenilia and mature production.[5]

Çerkez's deliberate subversion of the standard model of an artistic career takes on a humorous aspect in his self-portraits: although he did not live to remake any of them, the application of Çerkez's principle of creating 'two series of works, the originals and the copies, in two different chronological orders'[6] to the self-portraits would extend his reshuffling of the chronology of the artistic career to his representation of his own appearance, which would suddenly jump back decades in the remakes. Since Romanticism, self-portraiture has involved an implied link between interior life, countenance and the act of painting, an idea complicated in Çerkez's practice by his commitment to remake the work, a possibility reinforcing not a direct connection between the 'man' and the self-portrait but rather a connection between a particular photograph and its painted version, which could be made at any time.

The essence of Çerkez's self-portraits is not an access granted to his inner life through his countenance, but rather the slyly literal touch they add to the artist's self-referential program: although Çerkez's image appears throughout his work (in the self-portraits) and its documentation (in the deadpan photographs of the artist painting and shopping for makeup, records and guitar amps reproduced in the publication accompanying his 1999 Istanbul Biennial exhibition) it never leads anywhere except back to the oeuvre he so carefully designed and so patiently executed. If, as Justin Clemens writes in his admirable text on Çerkez's work, the self-portraits reveal so little that their real content seems to be 'what they cannot show',[7] it is because Çerkez was only willing to give his audience the information they needed to interpret his project in the terms *he* allowed for, and for this he required the paradoxical cult of anonymous personality enacted by his self-portraits.

Çerkez's individual works can only be seen as fragments. If they were complete in themselves they would open themselves to being excerpted from the oeuvre and recontextualised, something Çerkez would not allow: although he participated in many group exhibitions he never in any way tried to follow their themes. His works abound in inter-relations between themselves, as in the recursions existing in the homologies between his various engagements with the notion of stereoscopy: his work in general, structured as two takes on each work; the LP he pressed as part of *Mixer: 26 April 2033* (2000), featuring him performing two takes of his own one-stringed guitar arrangement of a selection from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, one on each side; his invention of a stereoscopic font in 1994 in which he created a series of date paintings, which were then repainted from a photograph of them hanging on the wall of his parent's house.

Untitled: 20 November 2009 2003

Çerkez's evacuation of any narrative content from his individual works is clear in his video pieces. In a medium in which many artists choose to tell a story, Çerkez presented silent videos of himself listening to music (*Mixer*), or simply of a spinning record (the video component of his 2003 series of works derived from a rare recording of Led Zeppelin playing *Whole Lotta Love* in Auckland in 1972), or a series of shaky voyeuristic shots of T-shirts in Tokyo emblazoned with bizarre slogans (*Untitled: 23 February 2037*, 2005). This latter work is accompanied by a painting listing, one after another, the slogans that feature in the video. Çerkez referred to this work as his 'concrete poem', and it is reminiscent of the montage poetry pioneered by the Wiener Gruppe (Vienna Group) in the 1950s who reduced the poetic act to the arrangement of found materials: this movement, in which an overall structure takes precedence over its individual elements, is essential for an understanding of Çerkez's work.[8]

'Both in art and in literature', Italo Calvino wrote in one of his final notes, 'the function of the frame is fundamental … we can consider poetic a production in which each individual experience acquires prominence through its detachment from the general continuum.'[9] Between 1992 and 2000, Çerkez was predominantly occupied with a project that is perfectly 'poetic' in this sense. Çerkez's *Unwritten Opera* could seemingly swallow anything, from a painting of the artist scuba diving on holiday in Cyprus (*Untitled 22099 [19 March 2025]*, 1992) to the Marshall guitar amp favoured by Jimmy Page (*Untitled: 14 July 2030*, presented as 'stage furniture/ props for an unwritten opera' in 1999), the project casting an obscure, destabilising light on every piece it framed. In its most characteristic manifestations, the project became its own content, as in the 1999 'design for the overture curtain of an unwritten opera', a curtain inscribed with those words, and the *Auditions for an Unwritten Opera* of 2000, an exhibition consisting of video documentation of the exhibition's opening.

Çerkez invested a great deal in the mystery surrounding 'great' artists. His own work became a self-conscious performance of an elusiveness as to the origin and meaning of artworks: highly conceptual works, such as his remarkable *Untitled: 10 June 2018* (1999) in which he created a variation on a Led Zeppelin bootleg record cover (which itself appropriated the cover of their official album *Physical Graffiti*) by rephotographing the New York apartment building it featured and renaming it after the building's address, were exhibited without explanation. Even when Çerkez seems most explicitly to reach out to culture in his work, as in one of his last pieces, a beautiful series of prints conjoining the dates of Led Zeppelin concerts with reproductions of Picasso drawings completed on the same day, he abides by no logic other than that which is internal to his own constructed artistic persona and his rigorously mapped out project.

Francis Plagne is a writer and musician from Melbourne.

Endnotes

1 I would like to thank Marco Fusinato and Ruth Bain for their help with preparing this piece. Its title quotes from the Led Zeppelin song 'The Ocean' from *Houses of the Holy* (1973).
2 Marcel Duchamp, 'The Great Trouble with Art in this Country' in *Salt Seller: The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, Thames & Hudson: London, 1975, p. 126.
3 Marcel Duchamp, 'The Creative Act' in *ibid*, p. 139.
4 On Çerkez's interest in De Chirico, see Michael Graf's text for Çerkez's *Auditions for an Unwritten Opera: Untitled: 12 February 2016*, Artspace Visual Arts Centre, 2000, n.p.
5 This aspect of Çerkez's work is referred to in many texts on his work, most eloquently in Victoria Lynn's catalogue text for the exhibition *Passing Time* held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2000.
6 Mutlu Çerkez cited in Justin Clemens, 'Dating Longing: The Work of Mutlu Çerkez', *The Monthly*, February 2006, p. 56.
7 Justin Clemens, ibid, p. 57.
8 See Gerhard Rühm's 'The Phenomena of the "Wiener Gruppe" in the Vienna of the Fifties and Sixties', available at www.ubu.com/papers/ruhm_vienna.html.
9 Cited in Esther Calvino's afterword to Italo Calvino, *Under the Jaguar Sun*, trans. William Weaver, Vintage: London, 1992, pp. 85-6.

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Pat Foster and Jen Berean
Rob McKenzie
Sibling
Slow and Steady Wins the Race

from left to right: _____fabrics interseason, *Dominant Design*, 2008, various materials handwoven, dimensions variable; James Deutsher, *Shiro Kuramata wanabee*, 2009, Two (chairs etc), MDF, Eames replica chair, Campari bottle, blood, pots, enamel, plastic, glass, insane, dirt, plants, packaging, IKEA chair, Simpsons figurine, weeds, candle, Prada bag, spaghetti, dimensions variable; ffiXXed, *Back to the Land and Book Hanger*, 2009, Lambda print and various materials , 85 x 60 cm

BLESS, *Mirror Curtain*, 2009, _____fabrics interseason, *Dominant Design*, various materials handwoven, dimensions variable, 2008

back wall: Heinz Peter Knes, *New Mexico*, 2009, screen print on cotton, 200 x 165 cm; Heinz Peter Knes, *Untitled 1, Untitled 2, 104*, 2009, Lambda print, various sizes
floor: Pat Foster and Jen Berean, *Shop*, 2009, aluminium glass, mirror and bookshelf; ffiXXed, *Book Hangers*, 2009, various materials; Slow and Steady Wins the Race, *No 11 New Bag Balenciaga*, *The Ultimate*, *Upside down*, cotton

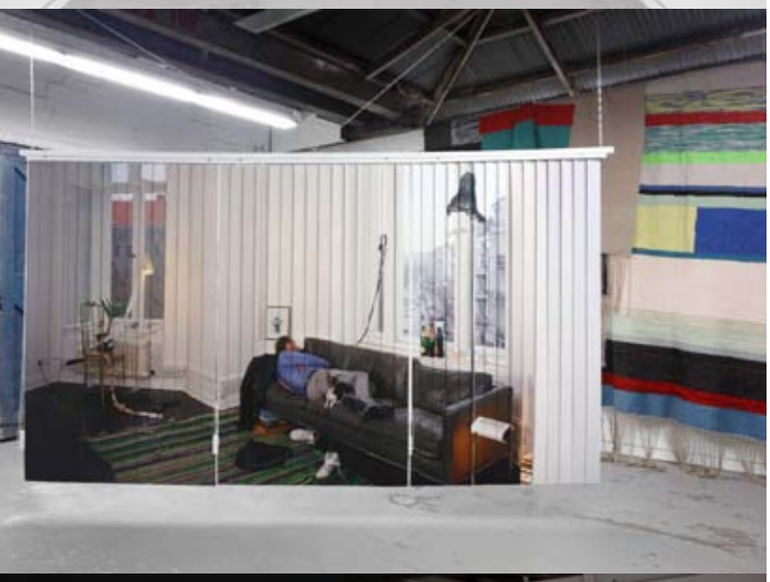
from left to right: _____fabrics interseason, *Dominant Design*, 2008, various materials handwoven, dimensions variable; Heinz Peter Knes, *New Mexico*, 2009, screen print on cotton, 200 x 165 cm; BLESS, *Mirror Curtain*, 2009

Demasiado Todo

Too Much of Everything was the title of Jorge Luis Borges' first short story. Written in 1939 (first published in *Ficciones*, 1944) *Too Much of Everything*, or *Demasiado Todo*, tells the story of a young Buenos Aires-based designer bent on creating production systems more representative of an emerging shift towards the decategorisation of design language. The story of Guilherme Tourinho begins when he is asked to review a recent text by Abdul Rahman bin Omar al-Ahmad, his nemesis and the rising star of the Arab design world. Abdul Rahman has written a treatise on categories of design language which is beginning to emerge as an influential text in young designer circles. Guilherme presents Abdul Rahman's argument in an unfavorable light, writing — 'In a world of global overproduction, products are no longer an extension of a certain lifestyle, but rather lifestyle has become the social extension of the product', highlighting how Abdul Rahman's position ratifies convention by arguing that design is consumed only by those already possessing a lifestyle that design is subject to. Guilherme's review is published in the journal *Prisma*, a broadsheet distributed largely by pasting copies to walls in Buenos Aires. The review becomes more controversial in the design world when Guilherme begins to produce a variety of designs based on those of Abdul Rahman's, but rejecting his theoretical position. The story ends with Guilherme working in a studio on Av Chivilcoy in Floresta producing only exact copies of Abdul Rahman's work in an effort to undermine the young Arab designer's distaste for collaboration — Guilherme's label is called *Guilherme et Abdul Rahman*. *Demasiado Todo* is Borges' first attempt at examining the nature of authorship and the first time we see these now iconic characters with whom Borges will explore the nature of authorship up until his death in 1986.

Jarrod Rawlins
August 2009

Jarrod Rawlins is freelance writer, freelance curator, freelance art advisor, freelance collaborator, freelance yogi, freelance fashion designer, freelance poet, freelance cook, and the director of Uplands Gallery in Melbourne.



Far Away

This text is how I be part of *Too Much of Everything* the first show at Y3K. As a close friend I been watch how James Deutsher and Christopher L.G. Hill planned and constituted Y3K together, and been catching up with one of the creator Kain Picken in Beijing just before the show start. Although I couldn't be there seeing the show in present, but I been watch the show very carefully by the pictures they send to me (http://y3kexhibitions.blogspot.com/2009/05/too-much-of-everything.html).

What I want to say in here is that, the status of the art and design even life themselves are more and more inconvenience partition for the one. It is very hard job for an ambitious theoretician to summarise and to pretend a pundit. Today, how artists or designers get resources, practice and operation are very different than before. So simply use time and areas to compartmentalise are unpractical technique, I can say an intentional tendency in this show (which I do like to see) is that the style and conception are not reign by regional variations but still polychrome. It has own temperament when I compare it with other arts in the past. The material and display pass to me a very strong contemporaneous and resonance sense. However, if through the new position I have in Beijing, I feel a bit dissever and irrelative. The globalise industry and commerce has coalesced and compress people in a small biosphere chain, *Too Much of Everything* are only one take.

I know it is just the first annulus for Y3K, and I know to request a show or few art works to comprise everything are a falderal, but I am still look forwards for the show which happened and going to happen at Y3K, and deeply I know we are still far away from too much of everything.

Hao Guo

Hao Guo now lives in Beijing after completing a MFA at VCA, he is a fighter and a lover, a freaky-baby-daddy and a bad-mother-fucker and is soon to open a museum, art gallery, art school, residency program and coffee shop in a Hutong in Beijing.

Too Much of Everything via *Apartamento* and *The Collectors*

ffiXXed's book-hangers are no more than a coloured length of rope with a clasp at one end. They are 'useless' products insofar as they fulfill a slightly moronic need to hang books. They feature in *Too Much of Everything* as visual punctuation: both objects *in* the exhibition and outside of it.

Attached to the bottom of one is the most recent edition of *Apartamento*: 'an everyday life interiors magazine' from Barcelona.[1] In this edition JD Samson from Le Tigre is interviewed by Luiza Sá from CSS.[2] There is an image of Samson sitting on her couch: 'Yes I stay home all the time' she says. Her leg is crossed and her head is propped up on one arm. A crocheted blanky is strewn behind her. Stacked keyboards are to one side. She appears kind of bored but thoughtful. The scene tells us something about the current interest in the domestic interior. This year's Venice Biennale was overtaken by talk of *The Collectors*, a collaboration between the Danish and Nordic pavilions curated by Berlin-based artists Elmgreen & Dragset. Instead of a standard national survey of new work or tendencies, *The Collectors* presented two fictional domestic interiors 'decorated' by the work of a range of international practitioners. The resulting installations purported to visually narrate the story of an unknown bourgeois family and a 'mysterious Mister B' respectively.

Too Much of Everything similarly asks us to consider objects as a kind of 'psychogeography' of private space. But more than this, the exhibition encourages us to intervene into the dynamics of domesticity at the level of the object. Why do we shelve, pile or store books instead of hanging them?

Nella Themelios

Nella Themelios is Coordinating Curator at Craft Victoria, Melbourne.

Endnotes

1 *Apartamento*, Issue 3, 2009. Marcel Duchamp, 'The Great Trouble with Art in this Country' in *Salt Seller: The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, Thames & Hudson: London, 1975, p. 126.

2 Luiza Sá, 'JD Samson', *Apartamento*, Issue 3, 2009, pp. 128-133.

A few thoughts on paravents.

As soon as I start trying to think about something as 'exploring the relationship between...', I get anxious, even though this is perhaps the easiest way into *Too Much of Everything*. The statement is one of those vagaries that shuts down the conversation as soon as it opens it, an example of opening reception rhetoric that goes down easy but, unlike a glass of champagne, fails to leave a scintillating aftertaste.

I wonder if the more productive approach is to try to pinpoint the blockages that ensure that there is a gap to explore (between art and design, for example) in the first place. This is also tougher, because there isn't much room for play, especially between categories which are already so complicit. Like paravents, these blockages are thin, face both directions, have folds, and are ultimately repositionable.

It might be possible to extend this metaphor. What about Nairy Baghramian's *Entr'acte* — the plain and unadorned white dividers she installed in a parking lot at the 2007 Münster Sculpture Project. These are the most vapid paravents I can imagine, little more than sheets attached to frames. But so much can be read into them, so much symbolic potential ... and all of it ripe to be explained away by some version of relational aesthetics.

Or Tom Burr's display of his own Helmut Lang clothes in paravent-like closets (which remind me of how the bags from Slow and Steady Wins the Race are displayed in *Too Much of Everything*). He talks about this project as 'a paradoxical building and shedding (undressing) of my identity through the codes of neomodernist fashion language, codes just past their prime'. Equally easy, maybe, to read decor displayed as art as an allegory for the situation of art, especially when the decor is unpalatable — or past its prime — enough that it allows for the feeling of interpretive distance. *Too Much of Everything* is, to my sensibilities, completely glamorous.

Michael Sanchez

from left to right: ffiXXed, *Mosquito Net Hat*, 2009, digital print on cotton and polyester; Pat Foster and Jen Berean, *Desk*, 2009, wood, glass, mirror; _____fabrics interseason, *Dominant Design*, 2008, various materials handwoven, dimensions variable; Sibling, *Y3K door*, 2009, pine, polycarbonate sheeting, plywood and existing door structure

The title *Too Much of Everything* offers a cacophony of meanings and possibilities, setting the tone for both the inaugural exhibition at Y3K and the launch of the space itself. From the monotony of conspicuous consumption to the increasing ubiquity of contemporary art production under the systems of late capitalism, *Too Much of Everything* might suggest that there is an aspect of futility — not only to the process of making art, but to any human enterprise in our post-post-modern, oversaturated and wrung-out world. The term rings with a simultaneous sense of abundance and repetition. But there is also a strange optimism to it, a call to arms of sorts, reflected in the outward-looking and multifarious objects, ideas and people that populated the nascent gallery over the course of the exhibition.

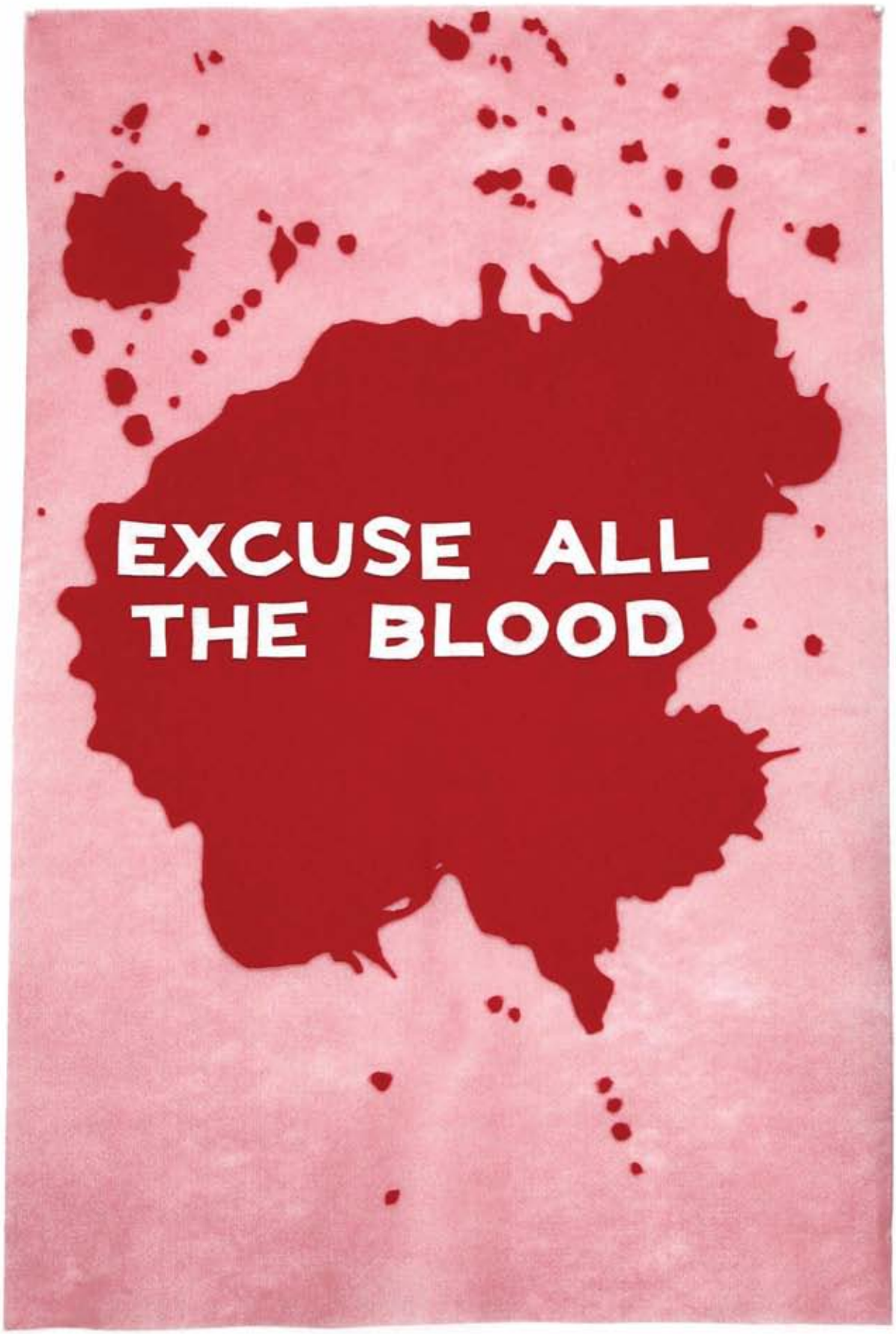
Mobilising the curators' networks of artists, activists, thinkers and makers, the works created for *Too Much of Everything* spanned global and local collaborations, multiple disciplines and big and small moments. Idiosyncratic combinations of artists, artforms, materials and motivations jostled within Y3K's cavernous warehouse architecture. The lines between art and commerce were blurred as fashion, design and architecture fused with sculpture, installation and drawing to create open-ended, hybrid works that did not sit comfortably in the camp of any of these individual disciplines. This adventurous, collaborative approach proposed an alternate economy of meaning and exchange, unbound by the familiar systems of art and consumption that currently drive us forward.

Too Much of Everything's sprawling premise sought to explode the myth that artistic production is ever anything other than a collaboration. After all, artists are just as enmeshed in the exchange of communication and materials, currency and commodity, as any other practitioner, no matter what the end point. Through its expanded approach to both curatorial and art practice, the exhibition intimated that there are myriad — and perhaps yet unimagined — approaches to this problem. That despite the fact that there is too much of everything, there is still more to be done, and new worlds to be re-spun out of this one.

Jeff Khan

Jeff Khan is a writer, curator, and Artistic Director of Next Wave.


MAX LOAD 1 TON


EXCUSE ALL
THE BLOOD

REVENGE IS USELESS.

Adrian Martin

THERE ARE MANY SURPRISING AFFINITIES BETWEEN Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) and Jim Jarmusch's *The Limits of Control* (2009). Both films are located and shot in Europe, and benefit from non-American finance. Many languages fill both films — and some of their best moments involve problems of cross-cultural communication, from Brad Pitt drawling 'Buongiorno' to Isaach De Bankolé trying to order two separate espressos. Both films are, very explicitly, fables about cinema itself: Tarantino reaches for a grand Samuel Fuller-style metaphor, a film exploding in righteous flames and taking all villains with it; while Jarmusch has his characters talk about the pleasure of movies which let you quietly notice the details of everyday life — which is exactly the film that he is himself making. (And a contemporaneous American meta-film trilogy opens up if we also include Michael Mann's *Public Enemies* [2009] — or, at least, its last and best half-hour. But we need to step back four years, to the finale of Abel Ferrara's sublime, underrated and little-seen *Mary* [2005], to find a far more poetic and lucid dramatisation of the literal possibility that 'a film is a bomb'.)

Both *Inglourious Basterds* and *The Limits of Control* are about professional assassins, and both involve a fleeting but powerful allusion to our contemporary period: Bankolé in Spain, and the Basterds in occupied France, are all regarded as 'terrorists' by the forces of evil conservatism: Bill Murray as a Dick Cheney-like USA politician, Christoph Waltz as the sadistic, scheming Nazi Colonel Landa. (In this subtext, Jarmusch is savvier: his black hero seems stateless, whereas Tarantino's white guys frequently recall rampaging soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan — or the torturers at Abu Ghraib.)

And, finally, both films are about revenge. But it is on this point that they truly part company.

For Tarantino, revenge has become his dominant — perhaps his sole — subject. *Kill Bill*, *Death Proof*, and now *Inglourious Basterds* play out the theorem Tarantino has so often sworn by: announce a character's revenge plan, give a persuasive reason for it (usually in an elaborate flashback), painstakingly trace each step of the plan, and — this above all — give the audience the orgasmic pleasure of finally seeing this revenge fully, elaborately achieved. Imamura's immortal title *Vengeance is Mine* could be the label for Tarantino's entire oeuvre; when Brad Pitt announces his gruesome flesh-and-blood 'masterpiece' in the final shot of the film, he has surely become Tarantino's *alter ego*, announcing the ultimate victory in this so-called 'art of revenge'.

Jarmusch is more circumspect. I have heard the story that, in the immediate wake of 11 September 2001, stricken with a bad conscience, he felt he could not proceed with a violence-based project. Across *Coffee and Cigarettes* and *Broken Flowers*, he has deliberately made his work lighter, more mundane, less spectacular. Although *The Limits of Control* returns to the *Ghost Dog*-style figure of the steely, graceful hired killer (an amalgam of movie types including Chow Yun-fat, Lee Marvin in *Point Blank* and Alain Delon's 'samourai'), this *tai chi* exponent eschews even the use of a gun — and when he finally kills, he accompanies it with the explanation that 'revenge is useless'.

Tarantino, for his part, has clearly never had any qualms about presenting and sensationalising violence. Indeed, 11 September appears to have had a delirious, perhaps wholly unconscious effect on him: since then, his films have become ecstatic fables of unfettered violence, albeit justified by some handy moral alibi (such the divinity of motherhood in *Kill Bill*). The right to 'strike back' — so much a part of American ideology and the American psyche — overcomes every material barrier in his recent films: geography, language, culture, money. Tarantino (like Scorsese) does not think politically, instead preferring the comfortable and simplified polarities of melodrama: by boiling World War II down to the struggle between one bad (male) Nazi and one wronged (female) Jew, he manages, miraculously, to obliterate from view the French Resistance! And the appalling sequence in which several remaining Basterds, soon for sacrificial immolation, indiscriminately and without a moment's hesitation slaughter every German in the house, is enough to inform us, once and for all, that Tarantino is no Samuel Fuller when it comes to the complex ironies and reversibilities of wartime ethics: the liberation of the concentration camp in *The Big Red One* (1980, restored 2004) is not a scene that Tarantino could ever conceive, or film.

And even the 'rewriting of history', for which 'daring' the film is being so extravagantly praised, is harebrained: Hitler dies by a revenger's hand rather than his own, sure, but since America still wins in the end anyhow, for Tarantino world history hardly changes. This is no *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick — although QT cagily keeps his options open by declaring to *Cahiers du cinéma*: 'If I wrote a sequel, it would have to be situated in an alternative future'.

Although Jarmusch began in the late '70s and Tarantino materialised in the early '90s, they are similarly perceived by the filmgoing public as American intertextualists, true postmoderns who return to the heritage of Hollywood classics — but filtered through the re-inventions of this heritage by filmmakers in Europe and Asia. In *Inglourious Basterds*, Tarantino is certainly happy to live up to this public image. Amalgamating war epics from Fuller and Robert Aldrich to John Woo and Enzo Castellari, Tarantino (like his comrade Robert Rodríguez) irons out the patchwork of generic quotations with a broad, cartoon style borrowed from Sergio Leone. But will Tarantino ever make a spectacular which is as savagely political as *Giù la testa* (1971), or as profoundly melancholic as *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984)?

Jarmusch takes a less familiar path, and risks losing some of his faithful fans in the process. *The Limits of Control* — a delicately stylised document of architecture, light, everyday rituals — is far more like *In Sylvia's City* (2007) than *Point Blank* (1968). Indeed, in its strictly minimal plotting, the film goes all the way back to Jarmusch's first, experimental feature *Permanent Vacation*. Jacques Rivette appears to be a major influence here: the Rivette of *Paris nous appartient* (1961), *Duelle* (1975) and *Secret defense* (1997), all recycled in a deliberately anachronistic way. Far from being a cutting-edge cyber-age thriller, *The Limits of Control* — more radically than Wenders' similarly motivated *The End of Violence* (1997) — is a film without mobile phones and computers, without suspense and action. Instead of guns there are guitars; instead of fights, there is flamenco.

There are certainly some generic elements — a naked *femme fatale*, an agent snatched in the street, coded messages and diamonds transmitted via matchboxes — but these elements are relativised, equalised; betrayals and kidnappings register no more (or less) dramatically than Bankolé walking through the streets, or the many idle, musing conversations with colourful strangers. And when our hero wants to go 'off-world' and quit the infernal cycle of this plot, he simply throws away his matchbox and steps out into the daylight … (What a fascinating double-bill this film makes with that other great minimalist cyber-thriller of the past decade, Ferrara's *New Rose Hotel* [1998]!)

Neither *Inglourious Basterds* nor *The Limits of Control* displays its director at the top of his form. Tarantino's strenuous entertainment, so eager to please and to succeed, exposes the weakness of his narrative constructions, once the usual shuffled time-schemes and other familiar tricks (which here have only a clumsy, cameo role) are absent. Tarantino gives the same, repetitive weight and shape to every tableau-like scene: always the same

Tony Garifalakis
Untitled (from the *Mourning Glory* series) 2007
Cut felt and glue
95 x 120 cm
Courtesy the artist and Uplands Gallery

'slow burn' of suspense, the same extended dialogue, the same Mexican stand-off of weapons, the same chaotic burst of cataclysmic death. Hasn't Tarantino's cinema been going backwards ever since *Jackie Brown*, his only film with a strong political-racial subtext — not to mention an adult love story at its centre? Yet Tarantino now openly regrets adapting Elmore Leonard, because it distracted him from his certified personal obsessions …

The Limits of Control, by contrast, is a bravely uncommercial and admirably ambitious film — but also rather thin and superficial. Unlike *Dead Man*, the masterpiece that Jarmusch has yet to match again, it is a film that gives up all its jewels on a single viewing. On that point, it is a lot like *Inglourious Basterds*.

But a specific, splendidly absent detail sets *The Limits of Control* directly against, and above, *Inglourious Basterds*. Tarantino's code of violent action and suspense expresses itself, above all, in a minute obsession with entrances and exits: how his killers get in and out of a basement bar or a movie theatre. (De Palma parlays the same mechanics far less fussily in *Mission: Impossible* [1996].) But Jarmusch's lone samurai needs only to calmly look at a high-security American military compound to instantly penetrate it: like a phantom, he just appears inside its walls, and then just as instantly escapes, disappears, flees. Vengeance belongs to him — or whoever hired him — but this revenge is, after all, useless: it solves nothing, changes nothing. *The Limits of Control* may not be an avant-garde masterpiece on par with Philippe Grandrieux's *Un lac* (2008), but, in its gently resistant way, it does offer us what Petr Král once called 'a secret image of the world'.

Adrian Martin is Senior Research Fellow in Film and Television Studies, Monash University, and Co-Editor of *Rouge* (www.rouge.com.au).

The Limits of Control 2009
Film Poster
Designed by The Refinery

Inglourious Basterds 2009
Film Poster
Illustration by James Goodridge

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e of what you were going to do as a career?

was completely taken with it – gobsmacked! I think what all worthwhile is when you learn your first song, and mine was *ge* by the Shadows. I think it was on the flipside of *FBI*. So I is riff, and when I got from one end of it to the other it to me that if you can learn one song, you can learn two, and

lways a major discovery – halfway through one song you realise the chords for another...

me chords, different order, or make that major into a minor. ver occurred to me until I joined Victor and his Blues Train, of, say, Elvis' and Little Richard's music had come from the idn't even know what the as in 1963! Victor was to real blues – Leadbelly, Hooker, Muddy Waters – ever heard of any of them, t of these records didn't ass on them anyway. So laying these numbers and utting down a bass line less by instinct, and that duction into the blues.

mind the blues though... ally wanted to do was join es when I was seventeen! t into the circle at that I'm still there for some

here, and still using the – obviously the *bass as far concerned...*

the one, sure. I did have a while, and I really liked it, rouble was that because a Precision for so long, didn't really 'fit'. So I it was easier just to keep Precision.

e you're scheduled to start the follow-up to 'Still Got s' very soon. How did the e about for the original

straightforward, really. oned me one day and said, o do a blues album, will me put it together?' There dea of what songs to do at t, just the idea itself, so I r to Gary's place one day, own with a small personal in his front room and he e the sort of material he king of doing.

rse it was second nature to use it was what I'd done

together before; we've been friends for years anyway. In 1980 Gary put a band together and we did a little tour and cut a live album, 'Live at the Marquee'. That was more heavy rock, plus stuff like *Parisienne Walkways*, but Gary was just touching on his heavy metal period then. After we did that album he went off to make his name with heavy metal.

He must be delighted that a subject so close to his heart has now taken precedence in his career...

Well, heavy metal is the blues, really. Led Zeppelin started all that by taking blues songs a bit further, doing them in that heavy style. And that opened up a new direction for bands to follow...

The opportunity to work with the Alberts must have been exciting. Too Tired, *for instance, suggests that you were all having a good time. There*

MASATO TAKASAKA *NEVER-ENDISM*

Helen Hughes

'… you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on.'

This phrase concludes Samuel Beckett's play *The Unnamable* (1954) and also commences co-curators Henriette Huldisch and Shamim M. Momin's catalogue essay for the 2008 Whitney Biennial that pivots around a theme of 'lessness'. Beckett's famous anti-ending characterises a pervasive feeling underpinning the creation of much art today: 'the inevitability of going on in the face of absurdity, as well as the lack of anywhere to go'.[1] In its circuity, the phrase 'I can't go on, I'll go on' conjures up an image of a feedback loop in contemporary art production where everything appears to have already been done (twice).[2] This notion of endgame or endism underscores the art of Masato Takasaka and his dialogue with Australian postmodern appropriation theory nearly thirty years after its inception. Yet, as with his treatment of modernist visual languages such as geometric abstraction, and in line with his interest in improvisational and progressive rock music, Takasaka's art comes at these ideas from an oblique angle. His work concurrently engages with and distances itself from the rhetoric of repetition and appropriation with a wry sense of humour and, often, a comic self-reflexivity. In a statement that rivals Beckett in its circuitous nature, Takasaka has said that 'art needs art to make art'.[3] So, by perpetually recycling texts and images assembled from a diverse array of sources to create new work, Takasaka both continues the lineage of and represents a rupture in the history of Australian appropriation art.

An organised effort was made in Australia in the early 1980s to align notions of endism in creativity and inspiration (the rise of appropriation) with a national movement in contemporary art. Paul Taylor, a vocal spearhead of the movement, suggested that contemporary artists who engaged with endism and appropriation were not merely being derivative, but new and creative in the way that disco music — which combines the old with the new — is new and creative. Taylor wrote: 'Disco's *modus operandi* is repetition within the fertile space of the cover version, the re-staging of an original in terms of a specific use-value (dance).'[4] Takasaka's repeated use of the copy or visual quote combined with his interest in shredding-along to improv and prog rock guitar music could ostensibly situate him within this category, as Takasaka openly revels in this realm of the cover version. Certainly in the past, commentators such as Justin Andrews, Lisa Radford and Damiano Bertoli have taken Takasaka's (normally) extra-artistic interest in lead guitar as one of the central points of discussion for his visual art practice — most recently with Bertoli comparing Takasaka's visual art to his musical taste by assimilating the role of the 'session muso' (whose profession is to play the songs of others, 'with signature inserted') with that of the artist.[5] These ideas — of endism in art and endism in music — might lead one to presume that Takasaka's *modus operandi* is repetition within the fertile space of the sprawling guitar solo. But Takasaka's art does not typically constitute the 're-staging of an original'. Rather, his practice pivots around the recycling of a readymade contextualised object in terms of a specific use-value that is progression. That is to say, where earlier generation appropriation artists like Juan Davila or Imants Tillers copied aspects of existing artworks to create new hybrid works which questioned the perimeters of originality, Takasaka treats the entire framework of a given artwork as the readymade that can be used to infinitely expand those boundaries through a recycling or reiteration of material and concept.

Takasaka's most recent exhibition, *Post-structural Jam (Shut up! We know you can play!...)* held at Y3K represents the most extreme manifestation of this 'readymade appropriation' in his practice to date. For *Post-structural Jam*, Takasaka employed a method of production that he described as 'alreadymade collage': he picked pages from assorted guitar magazines and directly appropriated their pre-existing layouts or 'automatic structures' (as well as their inherent multiplicity of authors), blew them up to AO poster size, and mounted them on the gallery wall.[6] This is what Takasaka describes as 'reverse' or 'degree zero collage'.[7] But the processes of recycling and appropriation did not cease there. For this exhibition, Takasaka recycled everything down to the title, which riffed on the name of his exhibition at The Narrows in 2007 (*Structural Jam: It's All Lead Guitar When Prog Rock Ruled The Earth*) and was synthesised with a comment from Lisa Radford's accompanying catalogue essay. Perhaps the difference between earlier generations of Australian appropriation artists and Takasaka, then, lies in the circuitousness that stems from his constant

(top)
Masato Takasaka
Post-structural Jam (Shut up! We know you can play!...) 2009
Install shot, Y3K
Image courtesy Masato Takasaka
Photography: James Deutsher/Y3K

(left)
Masato Takasaka
'Times Up' Guitarist May 1991 2009
Digital laser print on gloss paper
84 x 120 cm
Image courtesy Masato Takasaka

Masato Takasaka
I like my old stuff better than your new stuff (More prog rock sculptures from the fifth dimension) 1999–2007
Mixed media installation, dimensions variable
Ocular Lab, Melbourne
Image courtesy Masato Takasaka
Photography: Andrew Curtis

reusing and rearranging of ideas and materials. Takasaka's engagement with appropriation is not a direct quote; it is a distanced conceptual and physical recycling of the original that is largely removed from the earlier and more popular notion of pastiche.

In this way, a possible point of comparison for Takasaka's treatment of appropriation can be found in the work of Arlo Mountford, whose digital animations similarly treat the contextualised artwork as readymade. Take, for example, Mountford's animation *The Pioneer Meets the Wanderer* (2006), in which two stick-figure characters lie on a sunny beach while assorted icons of modernism wash-up on the shore (the first of which is, suitably, the most iconic of all readymades: Marcel Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel,* 1913). Following this seaside interchange, the two figures stroll past a series of paintings — including one by Tillers — then through Heide Museum of Modern Art, where they encounter further artworks hung *in situ*. Like Takasaka's already made collages for *Post-structural Jam*, Mountford's stick-figure characters inhabit the already-curated space of the two-dimensional museum. We are no longer viewing the appropriation of an original artwork as readymade, but rather the appropriation of the original context as readymade. And in this appropriation of context — this distancing through copying — we are liberated from the original, tailored (readymade) experience of the museum and are offered a new point of entry into the perception of art history.

If modernism was a reflection of life, and post-modernism a mirror held up to this reflection, then viewing Takasaka's work feels at times like the equivalent of entering a third mirror into this equation: a reflection of a reflection of a reflection. (Never-endism?) With this in mind, then, perhaps it is not that Takasaka is applying or resuscitating ideas related to postmodern appropriation, but rather that he is appropriating appropriation theory itself. Radford summed this up best in 2007 when she wrote in an email to Takasaka (that would later become the catalogue essay for his show at The Narrows) that: 'Your drawings look like you're a fan of modernism, but maybe not a diehard fan.'[8] Radford's comment identifies a level of detachment on the part of Takasaka — a distancing and expansion through visual quotation that stems from copying the copy, or appropriating the appropriation.

Perhaps most significantly, Takasaka repeats or copies images, ideas and text from his own visual and written repertoires. He frequently recycles phrases from emails, materials from previous sculptures and compositions from existing drawings when creating new work. One physical by-product of this compulsive and self-reflexive recycling is the sense of a constantly evolving, organic retrospective gesture in Takasaka's art: a surreal synthesis of time through the material distillation of past and present. Take, for example, the repeated use of perforated white chipboard with blue polka dots that featured firstly in *Window Shopping* at Penthouse and Pavement in 2000; then *Productopia* at 1st Floor Artists and Writers Space in 2001; *Structural Jam* at The Narrows in 2007; *I Like My Old Stuff Better Than Your New Stuff* at Ocular Lab also in 2007; and *The (self initiated, self funded) second (fourth) Y2K Melbourne Biennial of Art (& design)* at TCB art inc. in 2008. Takasaka also constantly recycles text: his own (I'm thinking of his mind-blowingly circular, stream-of-consciousness catalogue essay for Mountford's exhibition *The Hacienda Must be Built* held at The Art Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok in 2009) as well as the text of others (consider the reconstitution of Radford's email-cum-catalogue essay-cum-*un Magazine* 3.1 artist text-cum exhibition title). What actually occurs in the process of Takasaka's self-referential recycling is not the visualisation of a feedback loop, but rather of a snowball effect. His work does not appear to articulate the failure of originality after modernism — as, perhaps, Taylor and the appropriation artists in Australia of the 1980s and 1990s intimated — but the infectiousness of progress, even in the 'face of absurdity as well as a lack of anywhere to go' in the post(post?)modern world.

Helen Hughes is a project assistant at Heide Museum of Modern Art, Project Manager at Utopian Slumps, and is currently participating in the Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces and *Art & Australia* Emerging Writers' Program.

Endnotes

1 Henriette Huldisch, 'Lessness: Samuel Beckett in Echo Park, or an Art of Smaller, Slower, and Less' in Henriette Huldisch and Shamim M. Momin (eds.), *2008 Biennial Exhibition,* New York, Whitney Museum of American Art: 2008, p. 37.
2 Ibid.
3 Artist statement, 2007, cited in Justin Andrews, 'Arranging Instead of Making', 2007 available at www.justin-andrews.info/html/masato_takasaka_review.html.
4 Paul Taylor, 'Popism — the Art of White Aborigines', *On the Beach,* Vol. 1, 1982, reproduced in Rex Butler, *What Is Appropriation? An Anthology of Writings on Australian Art in the 1980s and 1990s,* Sydney, Institute of Modern Art: 1996, p. 86.
5 Damiano Bertoli, *Post-structural Jam (Shut Up! We Know You Can Play!...),* (catalogue essay), Y3K, Melbourne, 2009, unpaginated.
6 *Ibid.*
7 Artist statement, 2009.
8 Lisa Radford, *Structural Jam: It's All Lead Guitar When Prog Rock Ruled,* (catalogue essay), The Narrows, Melbourne, 2007, unpaginated.

& so, on

paint is a second-order image
unconstellated as a smear of stars
that can't lie cause they show they're fake
as if that were more true
than laying it out straight.
        stolen, the slogan & the poem,
the cactus & the rose,
the night sky of the flattest screen.

a severed grip blanches like the desert
for the without-flower you've sunned

you can't see your own eyes moving
over what the paint doesn't hold
though the gold & the boards shake
flat with rhythm

& so
        despite your address elsewhere nameless
faceless as the off-kilter silhouette
you cannot not hear nor will not know
        blameless between the blades of the dark
where the false wash tries to rub itself out,
                paint bolts down the vanishing eyes
                        in a pulsing hail of stars.

Justin Clemens

Helen Johnson
Housesitting (Still life with socialist tendencies, and a Garrie Hutchinson poem) 2009
Acrylic and pencil on paper on aluminium
90 x 160 cm

‘Come with us’: The performative and collaborative practice of



Panther

Kate Warren

Collaborative and interactive arts projects can be rewarding and challenging for audiences and artists alike. Melbourne-based group Panther (Madeleine Hodge and Sarah Rodigari) have developed a body of collaborative work that explores relationships between artist and audience. Their performance-based practice always extends to directly involve the 'audience-slash-participants' in their pieces. With works such as *Exercises in Happiness*[1] and the recent *Playground, a new world order*, Panther began with a particular question or theme, which informed each project. They then asked their audience to 'come with them' on an exploration of that question through deliberately constructed environments and situations. Panther projects 'don't have much room for the audience to do things beyond the "rules"' says Hodge. 'If they do, they're suddenly so far out of the game that they've stopped playing.'

Panther play their game well. When developing the question or underlying premise, Panther instill each project with its own distinct logic, yet the spaces remain incomplete until inhabited by the audience. Their efforts to elicit audience participation are not confrontational or hostile. Rather, their performative interactions enthusiastically, humorously and infectiously encourage the audience to engage with each other and with the surrounding environment. Panther are not simply searching for participation; they aim to offer an experiential encounter whereby, as Rodigari describes, you are 'forced out of yourself'.

For their recent work *Playground*, Panther constructed a makeshift playground in the Meat Market from tyres, industrial wooden spools and a fair amount of tanbark. The audience were instructed to play a game of chasey, but with a changed element: when tagged, the pursued person and the chaser had to engage in a battle of wits. The winner was the person who was able to argue that they had stronger individual characteristics or powers, drawing upon personal experience and various cultural clichés. Placing these boasting performances within the familiar childhood game of chasey not only reminded us how we construct ourselves according to certain cultural genres and aspirational ideals, but also the way in which the communicative and sometimes fraught relationships of childhood recur throughout our adult lives. Do we ever really grow out of our youthful fantasies and hang-ups?

The interactions that Panther facilitate are enjoyable, nostalgic and sometimes surprisingly difficult and frustrating. Despite Panther's extensive experience in creating interactive and participatory performances, one of their motivating factors remains the element of the unknown. Rodigari reveals that, when planning and developing their pieces, they are 'constantly trying to second guess. It's not until the performance happens that you always remember, you can't predict the audience reaction. For me, that's the whole reason why you do it'. She describes the 'moment of sudden shock' that occurs when something shifts in the dynamics of a performance, when somebody's reaction counters the performers' expectations. Of course this is true of any art form or project that relies on interactivity, but for Panther projects, where the audience are never simply observers, the risks of the unexpected are constant.

Panther set themselves and their participants deliberately ambitious and unrealistic aims. Through the project *Exercises in Happiness* they sought to analyse and understand the obsessive human desire for happiness, a notion that has confounded philosophical thinkers for centuries. 'They feel

UFO (from the series *Shoppingtown*) 2009
Image courtesy the artists
Photography: Michael Prior

(top) *Playground, a new world order* 2009
Performance stills

Shoppingtown, 2009
Image courtesy the artist. Photography: Michael Prior
(clockwise from top) *Camouflage / Swim / Up / Natural*

like impossible projects,' says Hodge. 'Their aims are big, so they fail largely. And I think we're fine with that.' Panther's projects are demanding for audiences, both physically and mentally. Their agenda is to use performative structures to provide affective and potentially transformative experiences, which resonate after the performance has concluded. Thus the tangible success of Panther's projects can be hard to define. Panther's frank recognition of this aspect of their practice is revealing, acknowledging that it is often the moments of rupture — the unexpected audience responses, the elements that 'don't quite work' — that provoke alternative considerations and offer moments of self-recognition for the audience.

Panther's latest 'impossible project', provisionally titled *Shoppingtown*, is an ongoing residency in the Westfield Plaza shopping centre, Doncaster. It grew out of a series of interventions that Hodge and Rodigari originally undertook in the German town of Essen, which investigated the politics of shopping and mechanics of contemporary consumer cultures. The project's present incarnation moves away from an overt critique of these phenomena and toward a reconsidering of how people engage with these spaces.

The historical role and understanding of the 'public sphere' continues to evolve and shift in relation to contemporary spaces of consumption.[2] While shopping centres like Westfield function as social hangouts they cannot be considered public realms, being privately owned. Increasingly they are developing into lifestyle centres which offer consumers not only items to purchase, but ways of life to conform to.[3] After its recent renovations Westfield Doncaster incorporates lush seating areas, much like parlour areas, into its architecture, revealing the centre's aspirational visions of being able to construct 'public' social spaces within privately controlled realms. Through *Shoppingtown* Panther seek to re-imagine and test the extent to which consumers are actually willing to use these places as social spaces. Furnishing these areas with tea, fruit, magazines and board games, Panther invited shoppers to engage more actively with the spaces and to re-imagine the current and potential roles they play in the shopping centre.[4] Such interventions do not attempt to overtly criticise but, rather, to shift such spaces of consumption out of their designated roles, provoking consideration of why such spaces exist and how they work to construct and define people's experiences.

With the project still in development, Panther see potential to continue their investigation through a broader series of interventions and events that people can participate in, hopefully re-forming the social space of the shopping centre. *Shoppingtown* also represents a new undertaking for Panther as they collaborate with media artists Timothy Webster and Michael Prior to realise the project's final iteration, a three-screen video installation. Hodge and Rodigari wanted to work closely with artists who would stretch their understanding of how video and sound practices could be used to influence and construct their performative practice. To this end Webster agrees that their conceptual collaboration has been 'very authentic'. This video outcome has required Panther and their collaborators to construct the interventions carefully, so that these interactions make sense in the present moment but also translate to the screen. Although still negotiating the complexities of this task — being authentic to the original source whilst constructing a video that works on its own terms — all involved are excited by the possibilities of translating these performative interactions using a new cinematic language. One of the clear messages that Panther continues to emphasise through *Shoppingtown* is the value and depth that their audience engenders into their projects, or as Hodge asserts, 'how incredibly generous the world is'.

Kate Warren is a Melbourne-based curator and writer.

Endnotes

1 Presented as part of the 2008 Melbourne International Arts Festival.

2 Jürgen Habermas's seminal enquiry into the bourgeois public sphere in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (translated by Thomas Burger, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992) has been significantly developed and critiqued by many social and cultural theorists. These debates continue to be relevant to current cultural projects, such as Urban Screens, www.urbanscreens.org.

3 Marita Sturken has written a particularly interesting book investigating the broader political and social ramifications of this type of 'comfort culture' as she terms it in American society. See *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2007).

5 Another intervention involved Hodge and Rodigari jogging around the centre in tracksuits, parodying the recent emergence of community walking groups such as the 'Westfield Walkers', which use suburban shopping centres as safe, secure and, it must be said, rather undemanding training venues. See www.westfield.com.au/fountaingate/news/WestfieldWalkers.html.

WHAT'S HE BUILDING IN THERE?

… *and the Gods made Blue* is a renegade installation in an abandoned Brunswick home constructed over a six month period in the twilight hours with the aid of a headlamp and a sack of tools. It has seemingly appeared overnight. These texts were written by a selection of authors with assorted relationships to the NZ-born artist Adam Douglass, who encountered the happening at different stages of its construction. An alien situation has emerged, transcendental and apocalyptic at the same time. **Walter Heke**

A MANIPULATED COSMIC OCCURRENCE

Flashlights lazily spotlighting the grass, we stand in the backyard between the rusted Hills Hoist and the back of the gaping old weatherboard, tiny fragments of domestic remnants underfoot. In hushed tones he is telling us about the Oedipal spirits who've appeared to previous visitors. The headlamped artist speaks of them with reverence — and to keep my superstition at bay I nod the magic spell and we enter.

Blue planes vivisect the house in disobedience of logic or practicality, appearing to traverse the walls at will. The hallway and rooms are divided into mnemonic cells: they force the visitor on hands and knees in the filth to inspect the forgotten details of a space — once a house, a home — now facing imminent destruction.

The crumbling plaster; a cigarette; a playing card; the stench of rotting carpet. On my knees I can't help thinking of the carpet of my own childhood; faces emerging and winking from baroque flowers. My body reacts, claustered and hunched, to this gothic-domestic environment, which evokes the combined architectural horror of Kubrick's *The Shining* and Polanksi's *Repulsion*.

I duck under and bob up through the blue mouse maze in an attempt to see the lounge room. I want to see the house in its entirety — but it's prohibited. The best I can do is find a cubicle, which constantly dictates my vision: a lone framed square of wallpaper. And you can't help but think of the confession box or solitary confinement, or preparation for a cryogenic nap.

Perhaps it's that we have to keep quiet, but something about this experience also recalls the improvised couch-cushion cubby houses of our kinderhood, and as we crawl under the blue protrusions they take on new playful facets. Torches on the other side cause shooting stars to arc across the canvas before me.

On my way out I inspect the kitchen, which reeks of the living, despite the filth and the darkness. In one of the kitchen drawers an old *Herald Sun* newspaper clipping of a 'Child Killer'. I ankle it back out to the jungle-ised backyard.

Adam Douglass, like a wasp or swallow grafting their unwanted renovations, has been invading the architecture of night time Brunswick. Like a child left alone, with deft nightmarish hands, Douglass appears to have created a blinkering shrine to memory in the face of obliteration, before the house, together with its blue growths, are returned to the earth and forgotten.

Drew Roberts (writer)

18 Henty Street is the quintessential neighbourhood haunted house, the perfect dwelling for the uncanny. The uncanny makes an appearance in the short stories of writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and E.T.A. Hoffmann and is best experienced in the privacy of domestic spaces; the secure and homely interiors encroached with fears of the unknown. This derelict abandoned house slumps to one side, its rotting structure and peeling paintwork emanating a sense of unease. It is a house that once provided a family with security and comfort — what happened here? Logic offers up explanations but local lore is more interesting, an accidental death creating stories of blame, guilt, retribution and a possible haunting.

Inside the house it is dark, expectations of a standard interior disrupted by the installation's disorienting effect. It takes a moment to understand what is happening in the space. Crawling under the blue protrusions that extend parallel to the floor, I find myself penned in the far corner of the back bedroom. It is here I recall Adam's story of a young woman's response when he showed her the house. She had sensed an elderly woman's presence, a spirit that wanted to know what Adam was doing in her house, what was he building? It is precisely this uncertainty that invokes the uncanny; the familiar turned strange. I pictured the cataclysmic event that created this scenario. In an instant, some outside alien presence came rushing in through every window simultaneously to invade the interior space, filling it with these structures, rendering it unlivable and sending any occupant diving to the ground. We didn't witness the event but we can explore the aftermath.

Emily Pauling (independent curator, artist)

It was 10 o'clock when the banging started again. Fuck it! I'm going to see what's going on. Lauren rolled over to go back to sleep, and I quietly slipped out of bed. The place next door had been empty for about four months, after Pete had sold it to a developer. It was due to be demolished, but while the application was held up at VCAT it had sunk even further into decay. It was hard to imagine even a homeless person finding it appealing and what sort of homeless person starts a bloody midnight Renovation Rescue? The banging began weeks ago, 11pm until about 2am. Having a smoke and a beer after a double shift, I'd ponder what on earth would make that kind of noise — someone pulling the copper pipes out? Three weeks later, Lauren was making a convincing case for calling the police.

The beers I had earlier must have added to my bravado because, without thinking, I put on my black jacket and a beanie, and grabbed a big stick from the front yard. I snuck quietly down the side of no. 18, seeking cover within a tall fuchsia shrub, while I contemplated my next move. There was no banging just the sound of metal scraping on concrete, and someone moving towards me. Suddenly my stick didn't seem so big.

Clint (neighbour)

Momentarily unfettered by the burdens of use and economic production, ruined buildings constitute voids in an urban fabric subject to ever-increasing regulation and control. They are thus potentially, if fleetingly, productive dystopias in which decay and disuse mobilise against the universalising 'progress' of globalisation. It was into one such void that Adam Douglass recently intruded. Douglass's self-dubbed 'intrusions' are long, monochrome canvases that originate in external openings (doors, windows, even toilets) and bisect rooms before crashing into or through the walls, like blocks of solid or negative light flooding in.

Somewhat startlingly, however, this isn't the grey wintry light of Brunswick but the diffuse blue of sunny Southern California. 'Malibu Blue', to be precise, named for the eponymous beach town and mecca of late-1950s and '60s American youth culture. The intense colour brings with it a tenor of wistful, utopic naïveté: think *Endless Summer*, *Cosmic Children*, The Beach Boys… Yet Malibu Blue® also reveals the flipside of the cultural recall it initiates to be its own inevitable reification and recoding, with consequences that extend far beyond its local origins: think Chevrolet Malibu, Malibu Barbie, *Two and a Half Men*…

The ambivalent light cast by the intrusions produces a similarly ambivalent spatial experience. While some parts of the house have been obliterated by large expanses of uniform nothingness, elsewhere a cigarette and salt-shaker, or old snapshots and receipts, are foregrounded in the exact places they were left by the owner. The clearly unsettling history of the house is rendered already and increasingly unknowable, but nonetheless insistently particular.

A precarious assemblage is revealed: wistful naïveté checked by alienation; the homogenisation of space checked by the particularity of place; and the amnesia of 'progress' checked by lived memories, however compromised these may be. By maintaining this tension inside a ruinous void at the very heart of Brunswick's radical regentrification, and against the backdrop of an unquantifiable global financial crisis for which there is seemingly zero accountability, Douglass's installation provides a rare, timely but fugitive place to imagine what our alternatives might be.

Ryan Johnston (art history lecturer, University of Melbourne)

I'M NOT A FAN OF LISTS.

That being said, upon receiving an email from a friend suggesting I check out the recently announced 'triplej's Hottest 100 of All Time' list I found myself at the website.

'Wow.'

The one word email I replied with.

For a couple of days I wasn't sure just what was most alarming about it. Was it the languishing of what little black music there was, bar Michael Jackson, to the lower regions of the list; the weird fascination of listeners with the 90s; the only rap songs being by white people; or the almost total absence of any dance or world music? But the single most striking factor for me was the lack of women. There were no songs by female solo artists and only a few songs, like The White Stripes' *Seven Nation Army* or the Pixies' *Where is my mind?* that included women as band members and only two female voices to be heard, both guesting for Massive Attack.

On some level I can understand why there is no Ma Rainey, Billie Holiday or Bessie Smith, no Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Patsy Kline, Joni Mitchell or Nina Simone. After all, it's a list written presumably by kids. Apparently also one by people whose musical development arrested somewhere in the 90s and with the standard rock riff, and certainly not music historians.

Still, with some 500,000–600,000 votes, at 10 votes per person, that's 50-60,000 people who voted. This is not a huge demographic and most likely most of them don't know much or any music more than thirty years old so it's understandable, to a point.

However I am baffled by the absence of Patti Smith, The Pretenders, Blondie, the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, The Breeders, Aaliyah, TLC, Destiny's Child, Janis Joplin, Aretha Franklin, Carole King, Dusty Springfield, Amy Winehouse, The Supremes/Diana Ross, Tina Turner, Mariah Carey (only the most successful solo artist in history — she is, literally, 'Bigger Than Elvis') and, most of all, Australia's very own Divinyls.

Some mention has been made in the mainstream media that this was a 'song contest' and not a list of influential groups or singers. Okay, but *I Touch Myself* is an anthem in many countries, not just in Australia. As a matter of fact I heard it played at an impromptu street party in NYC which sprang up in the hours after Obama was elected last year. It's that kind of song/anthem, and it's one of many.

Most of the blog chat I read was around the absence of women who 'rock' and whose songs do the same. Although I don't rate rock music higher than other forms, the absence can still be summed up with a single song. To make it really easy, let's use another from The Divinyls: *Boys In Town*.

Perhaps it's helpful to give some background on why my opinion on this should be of interest to anyone: I am a dj, so therefore I spend a lot of time around music and people. Besides my 'upfront', flyered gig I also do an anonymous 'commercial' one — every single weekend I play 6+ hours of hits at a free entry venue in the CBD, in a random, constantly changing fashion to a crowd that has the same characteristics. The ratio of male to female would be close to 50/50 in both song and audience. It's hard to imagine a night without Stevie Nicks' *Edge of 17* or Beyonce's *Single Ladies* amongst many, many others.

With regard to the 'Hottest 100 Of All Time' list, this absence of songs by women provokes many questions, not the least of which are 'why is triplej's audience so different?' and 'what may this indicate about those who voted?'.

The answer is not simply to be found in triplej's programming. triplej play a wide range of music, and the station also pays attention to gender and other equalities. Is the result a reflection of our society, or at least those polled, regressing to a more paternalistic outlook? Or, put another way, is this result connected to the persistence of patriarchal cultural memes?

Music is just one example of an area in which regressive gender positions operate. Right now our culture sometimes seems to be going backwards, not forwards. We see our governments dealing with nations whose leaders' attitude towards women is one we thought part of the past, with little more than passing comment to justify such action. Not as drastic but nevertheless a possible contribution is the after affects of John Howard's leadership, which in many ways dragged the nation back to the 1950s. Accompanying this 'throwback' mentality is the resurgence of beauty contests like Miss World, the strong presence in the media of 'WAGS' and women whose notoriety is due to their association with a man or their willingness to strip for a men's magazine, and a cult of celebrity that celebrates women for 'being famous' for doing as little as possible, save for gaining notoriety of course.

Women's roles outside the home are still being questioned. (Remember the Julia Gillard 'barren' thing?) Julie from *MasterChef* is a household name, Naomi Klein is not. The strong personalities and ideas of people such as Tracey Emin or Naomi Wolf are often ridiculed and marginalised. Women in 'serious' and/or highly visible positions in society such as politicians, business leaders, newsreaders or sports commentators often take on the characteristics of their male counterparts to progress in their chosen field. In public life women are judged by a higher standard than men. Take for example Carmen Lawrence who was, for some time, the rising star of the Australian Labor Party, and also regarded as one of the clearest thinkers in the party and a logical successor to Paul Keating. She was maligned over what was a fairly trivial incident that happened when she was Premier of Western Australia and was then absolutely written off as leadership material. A not too dissimilar episode happened with current Liberal leader Malcolm Turnbull and the insurance group HIH that did not scuttle his career in the same way. Further examples of this bias can be seen in the way the campaigns of both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin were reported; both had an unfair emphasis on their personal lives. Recently, in the Middle East Secretary of State Clinton was asked by a journalist about her husband's perspective on an issue.

To come back to a discussion on music, consider Amy Winehouse. She has created one of the great albums of our time at a very young age but is predominantly known for her personal issues. Her artistic merit (in my opinion, genius) is rarely mentioned. Yet the coverage of Michael Jackson's passing focused largely on his musical achievements with only passing mention of his personal life and brushes with the law. There are obviously many reasons for this but, nevertheless, it is difficult to ignore the difference in the way women are reported.

triplej is not divorced from the mainstream media. Its listeners do not live in a vacuum. However, after twenty years little seems to separate them from listeners to commercial radio. The fact that the station goes to lengths to play under-represented groups and singers appears to have had little effect on the outcome of the poll. With a few exceptions, it could be a list from one of many radio stations.

This ultimately begs the question: can any amount of promotion of female/minority/alternative acts make a difference? Assuming, and hoping, that the answer is yes, and also taking into consideration that triplej is a youth network, which means presumably a more forward-looking demographic, I am left wondering what triplej, the ABC and the listening public can do next.

Phil Ransom

Phil Ransom plays upfront and overlooked sounds at Revolver Upstairs every Saturday and as 'Dr Phil Smith' he plays 60 years of hits at The Toff in Town every Friday.

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Electric Ladyland, Jimi Hendrix (UK Polydor) 1968
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CITY OF MELBOURNE

Stephanie Hicks, *Pipe Dream*, Installation, 2009

SITE AND SOUND
Rosemary Joy's System Building

Ulanda Blair

The relationship between music and the body is an intimate and slippery one. Our experience with music is somehow more direct and unmediated than it is with the visual; you can look away and you can close your eyes, but you can't close your ears. Sound is immersive and inescapable; you feel it resonating through your skull, in the pit of your stomach and in the air vibrating against your skin. Listening to music, you perform complex mathematical analysis instantly and instinctively, searching for resolution, looking for repetition as the rhythms and frequencies of music interact with those of the body and brain, modifying them, manipulating them.

For *System Building,* an interdisciplinary arts project currently touring The Netherlands, Germany and Australia, Melbourne-based visual artist Rosemary Joy has created an intensely intimate visual and aural experience that harnesses the emotional resonances of music. As a trained sculptor working in collaboration with master woodworker Adam Stewart, Joy handcrafts miniature wooden objects that are then performed by trained percussionists. *System Building* is the latest production by the cross-artform performance company Aphids, a Melbourne-based, artist-led organisation whose projects frequently involve contemporary music, international cross-cultural exchanges and collaborations.

In *System Building,* the design and construction of Joy's modular percussion

Images (left and previous page)
Rosemary Joy
System Building 2009
Carved African rosewood and rock maple
Performance stills
Image courtesy Aphids
Photography: Yatzek

Endnotes
1 Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1999, p. 27.
2 At the time of writing Mexican Evaristo Aguilar was scheduled to replace Espinosa at Radialsystem V in Berlin.

instruments has been directly informed by the striking architectural spaces within which they are being played, namely Watertoren West in Groningen, Radialsystem V in Berlin, the Melbourne Recital Centre, and CarriageWorks in Sydney. Using both traditional and non-traditional performance spaces, the project is an experiment in site-specificity that collapses macroscopic and microscopic forms. *System Building* explores both the acoustic and visual qualities of specific buildings, merging the aesthetics of architecture and sculpture with exploration of experimental music, to create a profoundly affecting audience experience.

System Building made its world premiere at the Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival in Groningen, The Netherlands, in August. There, an audience of just twelve people was guided up into the highest reaches of the historic Watertoren West, a fifty-six metre tall functioning water tower. With its epic cylindrical form and its monumental occupation of the site, Watertoren West resembles *The Monument to the Third International (Tatlin's Tower)*, a likeness that is captured in Joy's sculpture. But where Vladimir Tatlin's Constructivist building was envisaged as a bombastic symbol of modernity, Joy's sculptural simulacrum eschews grandiosity and metaphor, favouring instead modest minimalist forms defined by geometry, cubic shapes, an equality of parts, repetition and neutral surfaces. Handcrafted from African rosewood and rock maple, the four miniature sculptures created for *System Building* speak to the personal connections we forge with objects as a means to commemorate and replicate a precious experience or space.

The formal reductiveness of Joy's sculptures extends to their performance. In *System Building,* Joy has provided her two percussionists with a score for structured improvisation with just five written instructions, leaving space for interpretation during each performance. The work remains open to multiple inputs, and to unimpeded and non-intentional activities that may or may not produce sound. An expanded sonic palette is contained within each of the miniature sculptures, and new percussive capabilities are discovered with each performance. Following numerous experimental composers before her, Joy

> ... is not concerned with prescribing a defined time-object whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance, but [is] more excited by the prospect of outlining a situation in which sounds may occur, a process of generating action (sounding or otherwise), a field delineated by certain compositional rules.[1]

In the *System Building* performances, two percussionists,Mexican Diego Espinosa and Australian Eugene Ughetti, stand poised over their instruments as the small audience enters the space.[2] The concertgoers, seated in unusually close proximity to the musicians as well as to each other, sit in silence, adjusting to the stillness of their environment before being gently plunged into an acute state of sonic awareness. Like blossoming flowers, the instruments' composite parts are tenderly opened out, the creaking hinges and sliding drawers piercing the noiseless skin that envelops the space. As the performers' fingertips gently begin to caress the smooth wooden surfaces — slowly at first but becoming livelier — every scrape, rasp, rattle and tap is amplified. Sticks, rocks, scaffolding and wood-fragments sourced on-site create vibrations and isolated chimes, lending the work an additional atmospheric (and site-responsive) dimension.

For twelve minutes, a range of quietly textured sounds are sensitively elicited from the miniature sculptural objects, creating a stripped-back narrative that courses through the performance space. Space itself becomes elastic, and the undulating timbres and tempos force a renewed attention to the cavernous architecture whose macroscopic scale is slowly sucked inward by the intimate display. In this intensely focused environment, Espinosa and Ughetti's nimble hands become puppet-like, their palms, fingernails and fingertips presenting as signifiers for the performers themselves. For the audience, the *System Building* performances are at once intensely private and powerfully collective experiences, with the close proximity of bodies essential to the creation of the heightened physical and aural space.

In an age of digital and polyphonic phrasing, where our aural experience of space is mediated largely by the pre-programmed beeps and bleeps of new technologies — of mobile phones, personal computers, cash registers, gaming consoles and Global Positioning Systems — Joy's *System Building* forces a recalibration. By slowing down the body, and by creating an ephemeral and intimate space for the contemplation of subtle visual and aural stimuli, Joy gives sense to the ways music, sculpture and architecture can all mutate and challenge each other. In *System Building* sound is referential and descriptive of the world and, in particular, descriptive of the specific spaces in which the performances are held. By stepping outside the normal limitations of her visual art form, Joy has created an expansive artistic language capable of re-igniting intense emotional states in one capricious moment.

Ulanda Blair is an independent arts writer and Artistic Program Manager at Next Wave.

Delusional Praxis and Cinematic Immolation in *Ecstasy of Angels*

Kôji Wakamatsu
Ecstasy of Angels 1972
Film still

Delusional Praxis

If politics is about praxis (as political discourse still believes itself to be at some vague yet imperative point of intersection between itself and all other discourses of action and statement) then it is at such phantom intersections that political effect reveals itself. Socially engaged art sets itself up for such a disclosure, as it especially prides itself on declarations of its assumed and subsumed politicised values. Many artists merely mutter something about detention centres or Chinese oppression or global-geo-ethics and most people seem to unquestioningly think they're somehow contributing to great social changes.

But let's leave the international biennale-ised noise-market of pumped-up political art which lulls curators to sleep tight at night in the belief that 'art is making a change'. Let me highjack you away from ossifying Eurocentric ideas of revolution and social change that have been the pantomime of internationalist art discourses since the 90s. Let me force-land you on the runway of what is maybe an equally delusional realm — but one that is salaciously so: Red Army-era Japan.

The period loosely from the mid-60s to early 70s in Japan is one of quite peculiar socio-cultural turbulence which bears only superficial resemblance to the more familiar US-centric counter-cultural youthquake. Japan's comparable youthquake is not simply qualified by an intersecting site of praxis, wherein societal events and social momentum are catalysed by their simultaneity. It fades up after the end of the American Occupation (1945-52) through to the finalization of the US-Japan Peace Treaty (1960); carries across the economic miracle prophesised by the urban renewal of the Tokyo Olympics (1964) and proselytised by the technological pavilions at the Osaka World Fair (1970); and echoes with codas provided by the quarter-century anniversary of both the death knolls of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic attacks (1945) and the silencing instigated by Article 9's prevention of Japan rebuilding its military infrastructure (1951). Framed this way, the era is far from a binary argument of 60s' generational clashes, and even further from the good-versus-evil parables therapeutically played out in Allies-versus-Axis historical recounting by radicalised European artists in the 70s. It evidences a dimensional warp not between distinct lines of force and action, but between whole matrices of force and action.

The 'salacious delusions' of this period arise from how Japanese society and culture evaluated its Self (both holistically and through schizophrenic fragmentation) and formulated debates centred on how Japan perceived its own nexus between a moulding past and

a vacuumed future. Most art literati are familiar with the European trope of radicalised historicism, rehearsed like evergreen ballads since the heady onset of *Documenta* and hence nationalistically performed within the grand proscenium of 'institutional critique' with Germanic, Middle Eastern and Chinese accents since (and — rarely acknowledged — originally staged in the many post-war 'new wave' cinemas from around the world). However unlike Eurocentric art communities' post-war repudiation of wartime ideologies still being played out by the State through its post-war economic growth (vis-à-vis Germany's unstoppable grandstanding of 'art and politics' which still smacks of children admonishing their grandparents' unacknowledged complicities), the Red Army's delusional state is the crux of its praxis. The United Red Army, the Japanese Red Army and the intertwined Maoist and PLO paramilitary units which comprise the Red Army genealogy presented themselves from the outset as a self-immolating locus of nothingness which was to be embraced in order to transform into a 'somethingness'. Despite its ideological furore, Red Army social reprogramming advocated a ground zero of the Self — not a rebirth of an idealised Self reconstructed by progressive societal change.

In this sense, the Red Army's actions constitute a peculiar form of theatre. Far from addressing 'reality', they were staging projections of their disfiguring selves. Their lifespan was embarrassingly contracted; their objectives outrageously unrealistic; their logistical management vaporous; their social contract liquefied. In fact, their actions are possibly the inverse of any politicised intervention of society as a stage as variously advocated by Dziga Vertov, Bertolt Brecht or Jean-Luc Godard (to cite key figures of the politicised mergers between 'art and life'). The game was already up when the Red Army formulated its frighteningly short-circuiting acts of terrorism — a string of hijacking, kidnapping and executing with a wild abandon that allowed their delusions to control their trajectory. Some continue to hold the Japanese Red Army (and its links to the Italian Red Brigade and the German Red Army Faction) as a most extreme form of radicalism, as if their political commitment was its core strength due to their unremitting refusal to compromise. But such a view is painfully romantic (not to mention politically utopian), and presupposes that the eventual dystopian collapse of the Red Army was an unwanted and unjustly meted outcome of adverse ideological forces. My counter view is that the Japanese Red Army's delusions were the basis of how it perceived and defined the world, and that any political intervention had to embrace this delusional status.

Cinematic Immolation

Not surprisingly, it is cinema history not social history that best illuminates my claims of the Red Army's embrace of political delusion. In Kôji Wakamatsu's *Ecstasy of Angels* (*Tenshi no kôkotsu*, transliterated as *Angelic Orgasm*, 1972), every frame quivers at the nexus of political praxis. There are two major factors that constitute the film's flammability.

Firstly, Wakamatsu had spent the preceding decade averaging a staggering twelve feature films a year, assembling a corpus of work that both defined and demolished the formal qualifications of the *pink eiga* (soft porn film) by focusing less on erotic depiction and more on psycho-sexual evocation. Most of his sex films tersely and feverishly depict the gendered collapse between sex and violence by portraying a world where the Self is a nullified node roaming a psychologically razed terrain. To the intellectually myopic, these films' confrontational explorations of sexualised violence leaves little recourse along humanist lines of explication. But Japan is arguably bereft of humanist compulsion — especially so since WWII and the manifold events cited earlier. Reflecting a Japanese sensibility and mode of self-critique, Wakamatsu's (and others') films of the era were rehearsing and workshopping ways in which the Self could be perceived as a slug whose only way forward was to dream that it could be a human. Synchronising with Japanese modern transcendentalism (where humanism never occurs and humanity is defined by all it is presumed not to be), Wakamatsu's cinema embraces the status of slug — in marked contrast to the European mode of existentialism which implicitly bemoans Man's status as cockroach.

Secondly, *Ecstasy of Angels* specifically portrays a group of radical terrorists, and is engaged in a hysterical enactment of the type of events and situations in which the Japanese Red Army was embroiled while the film was being made. Wakamatsu had ties with the Red Army (as did a number of underground and non-mainstream filmmakers also associated with various student protest activities across this period), and these interior perspectives colour aspects of the film. Scriptwriter of the film Masao Adachi soon after left to reconstitute a cell of the JRA within the PLO in Lebanon, remaining there as an operational terrorist until prosecution and conviction in 2001. His 1971 film *Red Army/PFLP — Declaration of World War* (purportedly produced by Wakamatsu) is a taxing yet fascinating philosophical tract about how war needs to be total and global rather than territorial and nationalistic. However, while *Ecstasy of Angels* might be interpreted as a dispirited and disillusioned portrait of the personal conflicts unleashed by people engaged in such activities (which Wakamatsu's much later film *United Red Army* partially paints in 2007), it utilises the social dressings of Red Army politics to stage a typically 'Wakamatsuian' immolation of the Self.

Ecstasy of Angels is densely veined with binary contradictions which both fuel and enflame politicised art practices. The group of terrorists (each named after a day in the week who collectively report to their unseen leaders named after months in the year as they carry out actions named after seasons of the year) are forever bickering about the conflict between the ego and society, the self and the group, the ideal and the reality, the purpose and the condition. The film is a delirious swirl of these classical ideological debates which leaden political cinema worldwide born of the era. Yet Wakamatsu stages and directs these interactions like the recitation of delusional tracts espoused by characters in the grip of forces shaping them despite their intent to transform those forces. Notably, these dialogue exchanges merge into ego-less sexual encounters of random occurrence and transient appeal.

Is this unintentionally comical or intentionally absurdist, as many people have presumed? Far from it: Wakamatsu systematically merges any sexual act with any social action. When the on-screen terrorists fuck while continuing to debate sexual repression within societal liberation, the effect is as unsettling as the oil-and-water agitation in his numerous films depicting sexual psychopaths and serial murderers. In this light, the transliteration of the film as *Angelic Orgasm* viscerally recalls a death erotic which has held a strong place within erotic and grotesque literature in Japan for centuries. The nervous laughter elicited from Wakamatsu's ungainly fusion of social behaviour, societal spectacle and sexual exploration is an expected reaction to audiences who think *Betty Blue* is a deep emotional experience while *Showgirls* is lo-grade exploitative fodder.

Wakamatsu's insistent collisions between sex and violence are engineered at both superficial and sub-strata levels of his films. The climax of *Ecstasy of Angels* is emblematic of his compacted dramaturgical axis wherein allegory and abstraction meet. Strobe-like editing deliberately confounds the senses as one of the male terrorists drives with an explosive-laden truck directly into the Diet Building of the Japanese government. A brutish Eisenstein-like montage features vérité-footage of the building, various angles inside and outside of the truck, and approaching and still shots of one of the female terrorists stranded alone on a deserted road with Mount Fuji behind her. Some of the footage is colour; some of it black-and-white. It constitutes a searing poem of penetration — of fucking the world with dynamite and getting an explosive hard-on as political praxis is detonated. This magical cinematic moment is the ground zero of the post-war Japanese Self as it immolates at the consciousness of its delusional praxis. This is the cum shot of art that knows there is no such thing as social change.

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un Magazine 3.2
ISSN 1449-6747 (print)
ISBN 1449-955X (online)

Published by un Projects Inc.

un Projects
PO Box 1611, Collingwood, VIC 3066
www.unmagazine.org

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Cover and insert
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www.rowanandholly.taylorslakesupercolony.org

Printing
Blueprint, Melbourne

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Thank you to Arts Victoria and the Australia Council whose generous funding made this publication possible and enabled the payment of artists' and writers' fees. We would also like to thank Jeremy Wortsman and his fine gallery Lamington Drive for hosting the launch, and DJs Bullshit Rare for picking up the funky crumbs. Thank you to Rowan McNaught for creating such a wonderful artwork for the cover, and for also performing at the launch with his sound project Pompey.

Phip and Jared would like to extend a special thanks to the writers and artists who contributed to this edition, and also to all those who proposed submissions. Thank you Warren Taylor and Sam Moffat for your amazing design — *un* is in excellent hands. Thank you Angela Brophy, Project Manager, for your support and dedication and Kelly Fliedner, Magazine Coordinator, for your enthusiasm and excellent ideas. Thank you to the Editorial Committee for your thoughtful and diligent approach to considering the submissions, and to the mentors who worked with writers to draft texts — the mentorship program is a really exciting part of the *un Magazine* editorial process and it is great to have your involvement. Thanks to the proofreaders — Zara, Angela, Kelly and Lily — for your attention to detail and your 'eagle eyes'. Thank you to the un Projects board and, most particularly, to the wise and wonderful Chair, Zara Stanhope. Phip would also like to acknowledge the excellent work of Sub-Editor Jared Davis. Thank you for your enthusiasm, dedication and good editorial judgement — it was a great experience working together on this publication.

un Magazine has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body; and the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria.

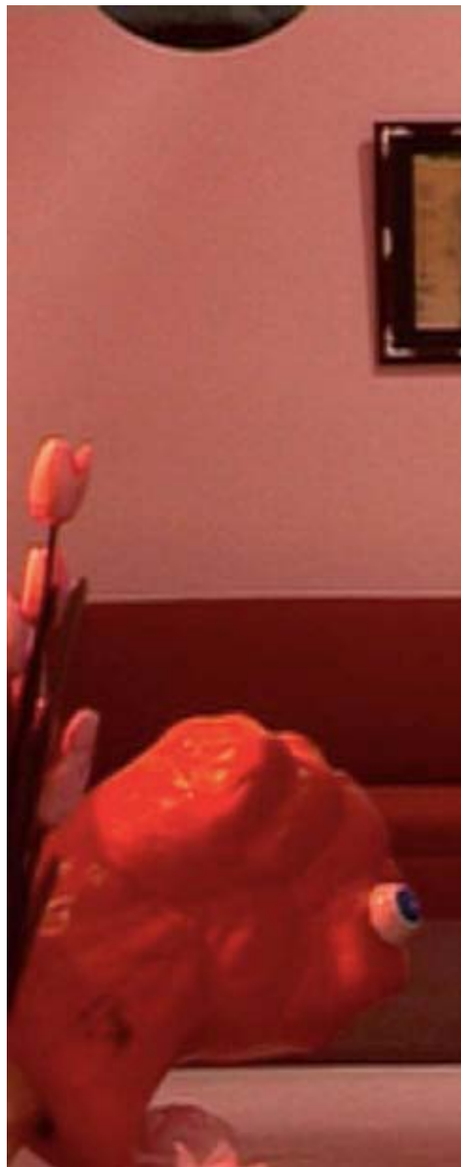
VOID LOVE
A conversation with Willoh S. Weiland

Emma McRae

Following *Yelling at Stars,*[1] their 2008 transmission into space from the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, collaborators Willoh S. Weiland and Nicky Forster have created *Void Love*, an online soap opera that takes us on a journey into deep space via disaster, romance, dark matter, and the never-ending uncertainty of life.

Emma McRae: *Void Love* is an intricate work that draws parallels between the birth and growth of the universe, a romantic love story and a woman emerging from a coma. In creating the work was your main interest exploring the ways in which art and science are doing the same thing, in that they are both trying to understand what life is and what our experience of life is?

Willoh S. Weiland: Definitely. I think, particularly, in drawing this analogy between coming out of a coma and the birth of the universe, the similarity between art and science is the degree of uncertainty that both narratives are grappling with. The scientists at the Centre for Astrophysics and Supercomputing (CAS) at Swinburne University[2] are engaged in great leaps of the imagination that require an incredible capacity to visualise what does not exist. This is really analogous to the artistic process in lots of ways, and also to this narrative of a coma — we've got all these disparate images and events and we understand that they're there, first of all, and that they're obviously relevant, but we can't see the connections between them. That's what the astronomers are doing, trying to fill in the gaps. And I think art really does that in so many ways, tries to articulate the things that are not visible to everyone yet.



EM: The structure and aesthetic of the work strongly reflect this notion of construction, of building ideas from disparate pieces of information. The minimal visuals of the work — much of which consists of black text on a white background — are like screenplay directions, and highlight the constructed nature of the story.

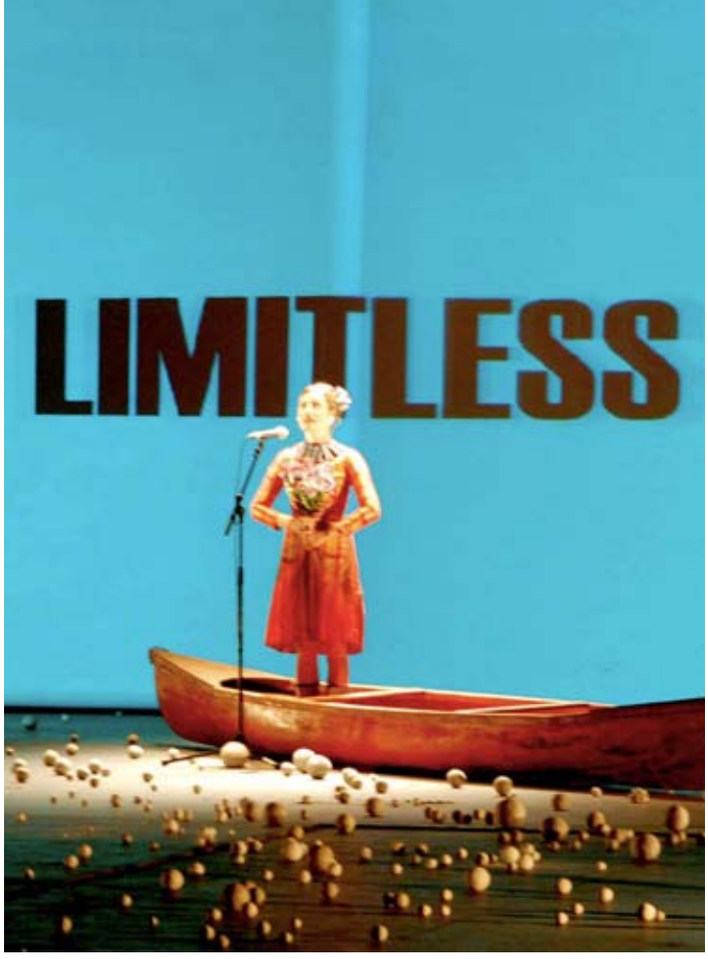
WW: I think that came out of the fact that Swinburne's got the Supercomputer, which collects data from the telescopes in Australia (at Parkes and Mopra) and turns it into information that can be used. They do a lot of modelling. But the idea of simulation is a construction in itself, which is evidenced in, for example, the current theories we have about dark matter. There are a number of theories (and this comes up in a few of the interviews and the episodes) that could match the observations. For us, the soap opera narrative became about the doctor who is looking after this patient, getting signs and clues — you know, the woman comes in, she's been involved in an accident but she's got tattoos of words and she's pale like she's never been outside — and he starts coming to all these theories about what this might mean, theories he feels certain about but that do not necessarily match the observations.'

EM: He constructs his own version of the truth.

WW: Yeah, and multiple versions of the possible truth. And some of them are right, but it's also another area of uncertainty, trying to come up with something we can grab onto. And I think that's such a necessary part of human experience, to try and create, otherwise there's just the seething desperate chaos.

EM: Which is why the soap opera form works so well. Unlike a film, a soap opera has no end or final resolution, it just continues on and on in a way that's more related to how we construct the stories of our lives so they make sense to us. The work successfully captures the overblown sense of drama in soap operas; it could easily be an actual episode of *The Bold and the Beautiful* that you've transcribed. It's not, is it?

Void Love 2009
Video stills



Yelling at Stars 2008
Performance still

WW: No, but I love that that might be the case. The attraction for me to the soap opera has a lot to do with the deep stereotyping of the tragic heroine and also that there is a mystery element to it. Lots of the images are plants for information — *which will be revealed!* We've made four episodes and there are not a lot of visuals in the early episodes, the idea being that we would marry the visual information to the amount of memory that's returning to her so in the later episodes there will be more. I guess that's another construct: having this cliff-hanger sense of what's about to happen … ongoing suspense … it's sort of painful.

EM: In the work there's a crash, which is a second — a moment — in life, and then suddenly this woman's in a coma and stuck between life and death. It's dramatic, but also very personal. Did you have a strong idea of the narrative and what the work would be before you began the residency at CAS, or did it develop from your experience of watching the scientists at work?

WW: Both. The pitch was to make a soap opera because I was fascinated by the implications and stakes of the research — it's breathtaking! We were originally going to talk about the Square Kilometre Array project, but then we decided to do this broader thing about just simple ... you know, the evolution of the entire universe![3] The soap opera idea came from responding to the research being really dramatic and weird and hyperbolic, that it's not this dry, dreary science. The scientists' research is organised into the periods of time in the development of the universe they're working on. The idea that one person's life can be so dramatically transformed by a second came out of the ridiculous timescales that they are dealing with. There are people working on three seconds after the big bang, looking at what happened in those three seconds, modelling those three seconds, and working out that the universe is cooling, the gas is forming and so on. Then there are people working one minute after, and people working three billion years after. It's just really impossible to get a sense of it, it's mind-boggling!

EM: Interviews with the scientists form much of the audio in the episodes and are extremely rich and layered. Then there's the voice of Kamahl, as the doctor, which is so smooth and reassuring, and provides such a sense of tragedy and drama. What led you to bring these together?

WW: Very early on I was listening to the first interview and I thought, oh my god, this is so dense, I don't want people to feel like they have to understand astrophysics to listen to it. And then there's the quality of the interviews, a lot of the speakers are quite nervous, for instance, and it just needed some sugar around it all. It needed a narrator with a mellifluous voice. And Kamahl is also a bizarre cultural icon who represents certain soap qualities: he sings all the classics, he's kind of a parody of himself almost, but he has intense sincerity about him as well. So, the weighting is definitely towards the audio, and I think that will continue. The sound of the astronomers' interviews is so beautiful and fascinating. I've never really worked with voice recordings before and I was so surprised how intimate they are. Listening to someone's voice is really intense, you're almost inside their mouths.

EM: Which is why it's so effective as an online work. It becomes a more personal experience because everyone watches it in their own environment, and they can stop and start or go back as they please. But as an artist this gives you less control over the work because you can't construct the environment in which you want the work to be viewed the way you would in a gallery. Do you prefer that or does it feel like a risk?

WW: I love control! But I think that online is definitely the correct environment for it to be viewed. I think the work has to be personal because it requires a few viewings and the license to stop and start, and I couldn't think of a way to do that without making a movie. I guess for us it was like, how can we make something that will make people spend time with an artwork online? In terms of the interactivity of the website and the way in which the episodes work, the challenge is whether it's something that people will treat as a work to come back to. And I like encouraging people to drink martinis and put headphones on, you know, *I'd* really respond to that!

Emma McRae is a Melbourne-based writer and curator.

Endnotes

1 www.yellingatstars.com
2 The artists undertook a Synapse residency through the Australian Network for Art and Technology at CAS for the development of *Void Love*. *Void Love* was supported by the Australian Network for Art and Technology, The Australia Council for the Arts and The Centre for Astrophysics and Supercomputing, Swinburne University of Technology.
3 Australia is currently bidding against South Africa to build the Square Kilometre Array, which will be the biggest radio telescope in the world.

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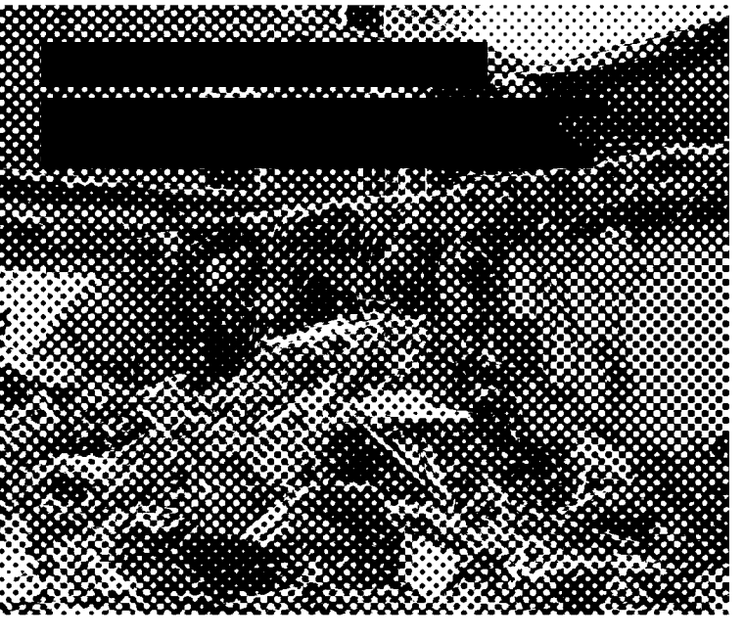

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Artistic Differences: Ascetic Aesthetic vs Opportunistic Good Times

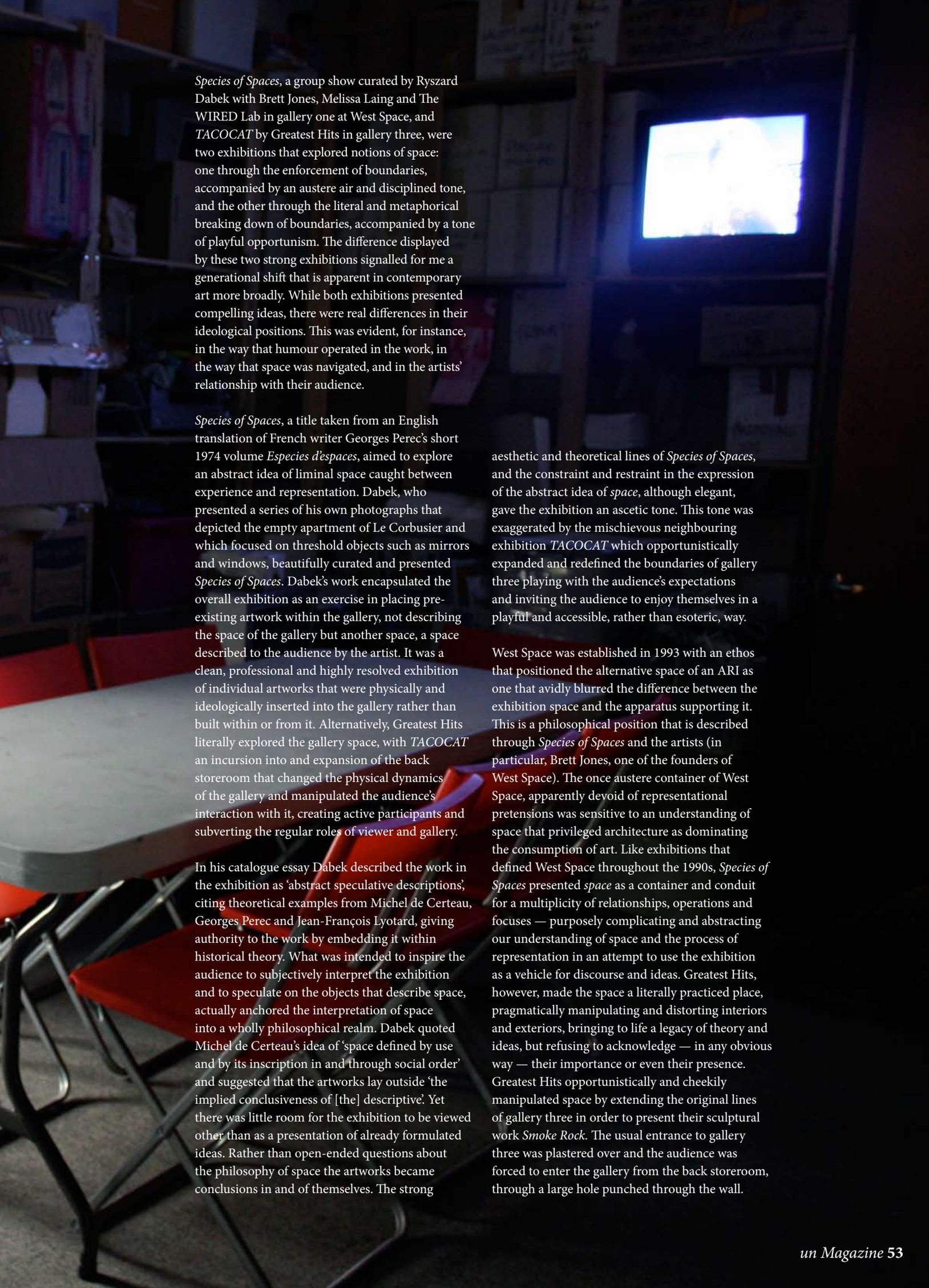
TACOCAT
Greatest Hits (Gavin Bell, Jarrah de Kuijer & Simon McGlinn)

and

Species of Spaces
Curator: Ryszard Dabek
Artists: Ryszard Dabek, Brett Jones, Melissa Laing and The WIRED Lab

12 June — 4 July 2009

Kelly Fliedner



Species of Spaces, a group show curated by Ryszard Dabek with Brett Jones, Melissa Laing and The WIRED Lab in gallery one at West Space, and *TACOCAT* by Greatest Hits in gallery three, were two exhibitions that explored notions of space: one through the enforcement of boundaries, accompanied by an austere air and disciplined tone, and the other through the literal and metaphorical breaking down of boundaries, accompanied by a tone of playful opportunism. The difference displayed by these two strong exhibitions signalled for me a generational shift that is apparent in contemporary art more broadly. While both exhibitions presented compelling ideas, there were real differences in their ideological positions. This was evident, for instance, in the way that humour operated in the work, in the way that space was navigated, and in the artists' relationship with their audience.

Species of Spaces, a title taken from an English translation of French writer Georges Perec's short 1974 volume *Especies d'espaces*, aimed to explore an abstract idea of liminal space caught between experience and representation. Dabek, who presented a series of his own photographs that depicted the empty apartment of Le Corbusier and which focused on threshold objects such as mirrors and windows, beautifully curated and presented *Species of Spaces*. Dabek's work encapsulated the overall exhibition as an exercise in placing pre-existing artwork within the gallery, not describing the space of the gallery but another space, a space described to the audience by the artist. It was a clean, professional and highly resolved exhibition of individual artworks that were physically and ideologically inserted into the gallery rather than built within or from it. Alternatively, Greatest Hits literally explored the gallery space, with *TACOCAT* an incursion into and expansion of the back storeroom that changed the physical dynamics of the gallery and manipulated the audience's interaction with it, creating active participants and subverting the regular roles of viewer and gallery.

In his catalogue essay Dabek described the work in the exhibition as 'abstract speculative descriptions', citing theoretical examples from Michel de Certeau, Georges Perec and Jean-François Lyotard, giving authority to the work by embedding it within historical theory. What was intended to inspire the audience to subjectively interpret the exhibition and to speculate on the objects that describe space, actually anchored the interpretation of space into a wholly philosophical realm. Dabek quoted Michel de Certeau's idea of 'space defined by use and by its inscription in and through social order' and suggested that the artworks lay outside 'the implied conclusiveness of [the] descriptive'. Yet there was little room for the exhibition to be viewed other than as a presentation of already formulated ideas. Rather than open-ended questions about the philosophy of space the artworks became conclusions in and of themselves. The strong aesthetic and theoretical lines of *Species of Spaces*, and the constraint and restraint in the expression of the abstract idea of *space*, although elegant, gave the exhibition an ascetic tone. This tone was exaggerated by the mischievous neighbouring exhibition *TACOCAT* which opportunistically expanded and redefined the boundaries of gallery three playing with the audience's expectations and inviting the audience to enjoy themselves in a playful and accessible, rather than esoteric, way.

West Space was established in 1993 with an ethos that positioned the alternative space of an ARI as one that avidly blurred the difference between the exhibition space and the apparatus supporting it. This is a philosophical position that is described through *Species of Spaces* and the artists (in particular, Brett Jones, one of the founders of West Space). The once austere container of West Space, apparently devoid of representational pretensions was sensitive to an understanding of space that privileged architecture as dominating the consumption of art. Like exhibitions that defined West Space throughout the 1990s, *Species of Spaces* presented *space* as a container and conduit for a multiplicity of relationships, operations and focuses — purposely complicating and abstracting our understanding of space and the process of representation in an attempt to use the exhibition as a vehicle for discourse and ideas. Greatest Hits, however, made the space a literally practiced place, pragmatically manipulating and distorting interiors and exteriors, bringing to life a legacy of theory and ideas, but refusing to acknowledge — in any obvious way — their importance or even their presence. Greatest Hits opportunistically and cheekily manipulated space by extending the original lines of gallery three in order to present their sculptural work *Smoke Rock*. The usual entrance to gallery three was plastered over and the audience was forced to enter the gallery from the back storeroom, through a large hole punched through the wall.

Species of Spaces (installation view) 2009
(top) Brett Jones
(bottom, from left) Ryszard Dabek, Brett Jones

The audience was then met with an absurd installation — a startling white room, an old fridge used as a plinth and a smoke machine propping up a mound of concrete decorated with stickers, chewing gum and a few cigarette butts. The combination of harsh fluoro light and smoke obscured the depth of the room, making it an uncomfortable and disorienting place to linger, whilst a colourful bean-bag on the floor invited the audience to sit and loiter within the room. This completed the playful caricature of a gallery space, within the space of the gallery. In comparison to the harsh environment of gallery three, the cool, dark storeroom offered a relief for the audience and housed two videos, each placed with a much needed and comfortable amount of room. This alternate presentation of artwork, which took place outside the regular gallery space, acknowledged the potential of ongoing activity within a workshop environment.

To describe space is not merely to re-present it but rather to instigate processes that allow an audience to inhabit it. The space presented by Greatest Hits alluded to an ever-progressing practice and was an attempt to defy rational outcome-based approaches to exhibitions. This was in contrast to the highly refined and almost static *Species of Spaces*. While there was an obvious element of humour to the *TACOCAT* installation, there was also an implicit and sincere questioning about the space of the gallery and the role of the audience, whilst also embodying a pathos that recognised the impossibility of seeking concise answers, similar to the open-ended and answerless questions presented in *Species of Spaces*. The experience of the exhibition — the entry through the storeroom, the venturing into awkward space and the invitation to the audience to enjoy themselves in an unassuming and simple way — positioned the installation as one that was obliquely peering at itself. The mode of humour adopted by Greatest Hits is one that seems to position the objective of 'understanding' as an absurd task. Compared to the genuine seriousness of *Species of Spaces*, Greatest Hits' project embodied a flippant and ubiquitous irony, which, for me, is in no way a reductive stance. This outlook perhaps defines the current generation who, as Francis Fukuyama described in his *The End of History,* have lost the ability to control or propel a narrative of their own history. Indeed this dissipation of any 'grand' historical narrative has perhaps worn away my generation's aspiration for authority or entitlement, something which possibly defined the previous generation. The artists in *Species of Spaces* grew up in an postmodern era of deconstruction. They celebrated theory, they believed in the possibilities for political change, and, most differently, they perhaps believed they could create political resolutions.

The intention of both *Species of Spaces* and *TACOCAT* was to take something familiar (an object, an image, a material, a word, or social intervention) and manipulate it into something that challenged the viewer's perceptual awareness. The main difference between the two projects was that *Species of Spaces* was intentionally placed within an institutional and historical discourse through its rich conceptual and theoretical background, while Greatest Hits automatically — and maybe unconsciously — subsumed that discourse and then rejected it as lacking currency with the attitudes of their generation. These gestures move away from an art that is dictated by theory and architectural space to an art that uses the space in a more advantageous and opportunistic mode — creating a space for art rather than recreating the art of space. The simple absurdity of and humour within *TACOCAT* mocked the fixed art object in *Species of Spaces*, its presence and its concreteness. Although both exhibitions approached the uncertainty and crisis experienced by an audience negotiating ideas of space at the end of postmodernism, Greatest Hits just has a little more fun doing it and appeared to present new energies for a new generation.

Kelly Fliedner is currently at Melbourne University researching a Masters in early postmodern Australian art. She is the Magazine Coordinator for *un Magazine*; works for Punctum; is a Program Committee member at West Space; and is also the (Acting) Program Coordinator at West Space.

Greatest Hits (Gavin Bell, Jarrah de Kuijer & Simon McGlinn)
TACOCAT (installation view) 2009

The Heat Is … On!

(TRANSCRIPT)

Trevor: Did you get a perm just for this?

Renny Kodgers: It's the steam — it's heating it up all curly like — all over. Come on in and shut that door! What do you think this is? Some kind of like ladies' club? We do it hot and hard in here. Come on!

You're acting like there's something strange going on. I'm just having a sauna. You know you can take off your clothes. Do you normally have a sauna with your clothes on? Is that what you normally do?

Feeling comfortable?

T: No Renny. But thanks Renny, it's lovely.

RK: Hey sweetie pie. Do you eat meat?

Sharon: No.

RK: I'm having a lot of trouble getting rid of these dogs. I was hoping that you might be able to wrap your lips around one of them.

Helen: That's because they're bone dry.

S: I'm so uncomfortable right now. It's great.

Brian: It's great.

RK: It's OK. Give me your hand now. I'm here for you precious, every step of the way. I know that it's hot in here. But you have a friend.

Can you shut the door!

Oh, so you've taken on the role of gatekeeper have you?

B: Just for a moment buddy.

[Sharon gestures for her friend outside the sauna to come in.]

H: Don't ask for protection. Stop it Sharon. You're on your own.

RK: What? You think he's going to protect you?

Tracey: He can't save you.

H: There's no room for him on the seat.

RK: He can't save you. I've got my eyes on you. I've got my eyes all over all of you.

Don't worry you're not alone. Would you like to put some water on the coals? Put it over there.

[Sharon takes the ladle and pours water on the coals.]

Can you feel it?

H: Maybe Sharon would like to move closer?

S: I'm fine here.

RK: She can feel me.

T: Well, you came for an Australian experience.

RK: Is this how you folks take a sauna? 'Cause I usually take my clothes off.

The architect behind Renny Kodgers is Mark Shorter, a Sydney-based artist whose work is informed by the intersections between variety theatre and contemporary performance art practices.

(left) Renny Kodgers ambushing Kenny Rogers as he leaves the State Theatre, Sydney

(right) *The Heat Is ... On!* 2008
Performance stills
Chalkhorse Gallery, Sydney

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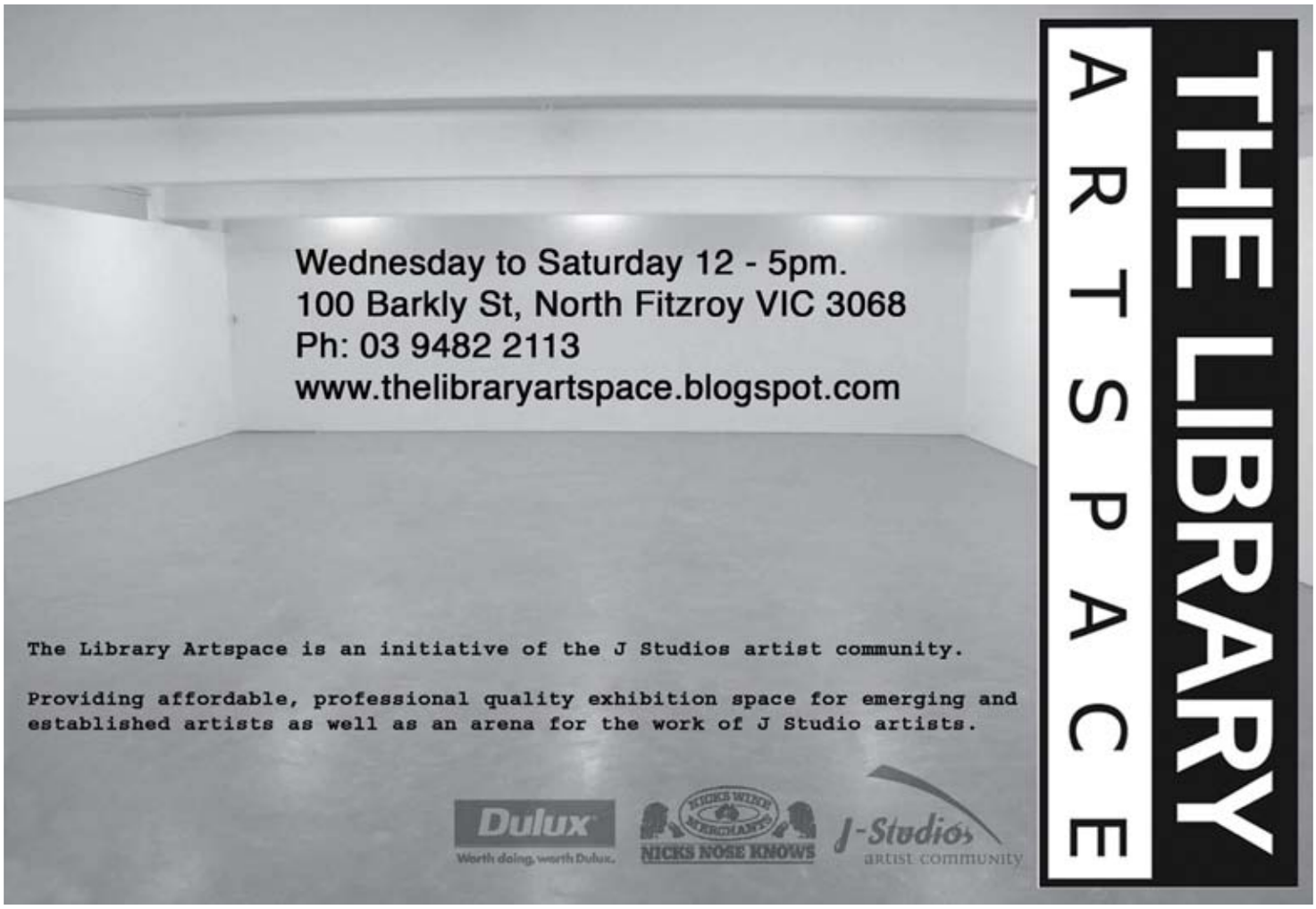


Locating the Garage

ARIs in Canberra

Review: Somaya Langley

In early 2009 Melody Ellis and Sarah Logan co-founded *Garage Openings*, an artist-run initiative (ARI) that operates — quite literally — out of a suburban garage in Canberra. The inaugural exhibition, *Feathering the Nest*, exhibited works sent by post or email from close-by neighbouring suburbs as well as contributions from interstate and overseas.

The issue of space (studio space, rehearsal space, exhibition space, living space and so on) is an important topic for most arts practitioners, particularly those involved in running an ARI. Often finding the location is serendipitous; retaining it is another matter. Rental increases push artists out of ideal inner city venues or they were never affordable in the first place. Either way, options are limited. Ellis and Logan have intentionally undermined this dilemma by deliberately creating an exhibition space not attached to a particular physical location. A space that can shift, transform and even migrate. This is as much a practical concern as a political one. When establishing *Garage Openings*, neither Ellis or Logan were certain about how long they would remain living in Canberra, and they wanted to ensure their collaboration was flexible.

Garage Openings resembles several other projects including Odd Productions' performances staged in various Canberra houses during the 1990s and, a decade later, the spate of *Empty Shows* in cities across Australia that took the form of impromptu and illegal drawing, graffiti, stencil, installation and audiovisual art events held in abandoned spaces. *Garage* festival (similarly named), held in Stralsund's city centre, ran for nine years in a garage originally used to store horse carriages. Closer to home, Newcastle's *This Is Not Art* festival has appropriated disused buildings since its inception, while the year-old *Renew Newcastle* project assists artists in gaining access to vacant spaces in Newcastle's CBD. Furthermore, to mitigate limitations of access to physical space, artists are increasingly using online modes of operation and presentation. Projects like the Australia-Berlin exchange, *TRANSIT LOUNGE*, adopted this approach in its most recent iteration *Moving While Standing Still,* which took the form of a residency where the artists remained at home, and collaborative work was developed and displayed online.

Both co-founders have a long and independent history of running exhibitions and events of this nature. Ellis was a founder and co-director of the Sydney ARI, *Gallery WREN*, and in 2007 was Project Manager of the 1st Athens Biennial, *Destroy Athens*. Parallel exhibition venues for the Biennial included a dishevelled apartment block and a disused hotel in downtown Athens, complete with peeling wallpaper and barbed wire adorning the basement windows. Similarly, Logan has been involved in running numerous gigs around the Canberra region, including utilising public parks or her own back verandah.

Since 2000, changes in financial and taxation rulings have substantially impacted the operational environments of ARIs, requiring them to act as businesses and thus bringing considerable additional administrative costs and workloads. Public liability insurance and the Goods and Services Tax could be labelled as two of the culprits that impact on artists' adoption of spaces by adding legal and bureaucratic hurdles. The collaboration between Ellis and Logan that is *Garage Openings* attempts to explore, promote and agitate the use of space for the presentation and promotion of contemporary art practice, whether it be from a garage in Yarralumla or elsewhere.

Somaya Langley is Co-Director of the Electrofringe festival.

Feathering the Nest 2009
Installation views
Photography: Melody Ellis

Cantrills' Expanded Cinema

Text: Jon Dale

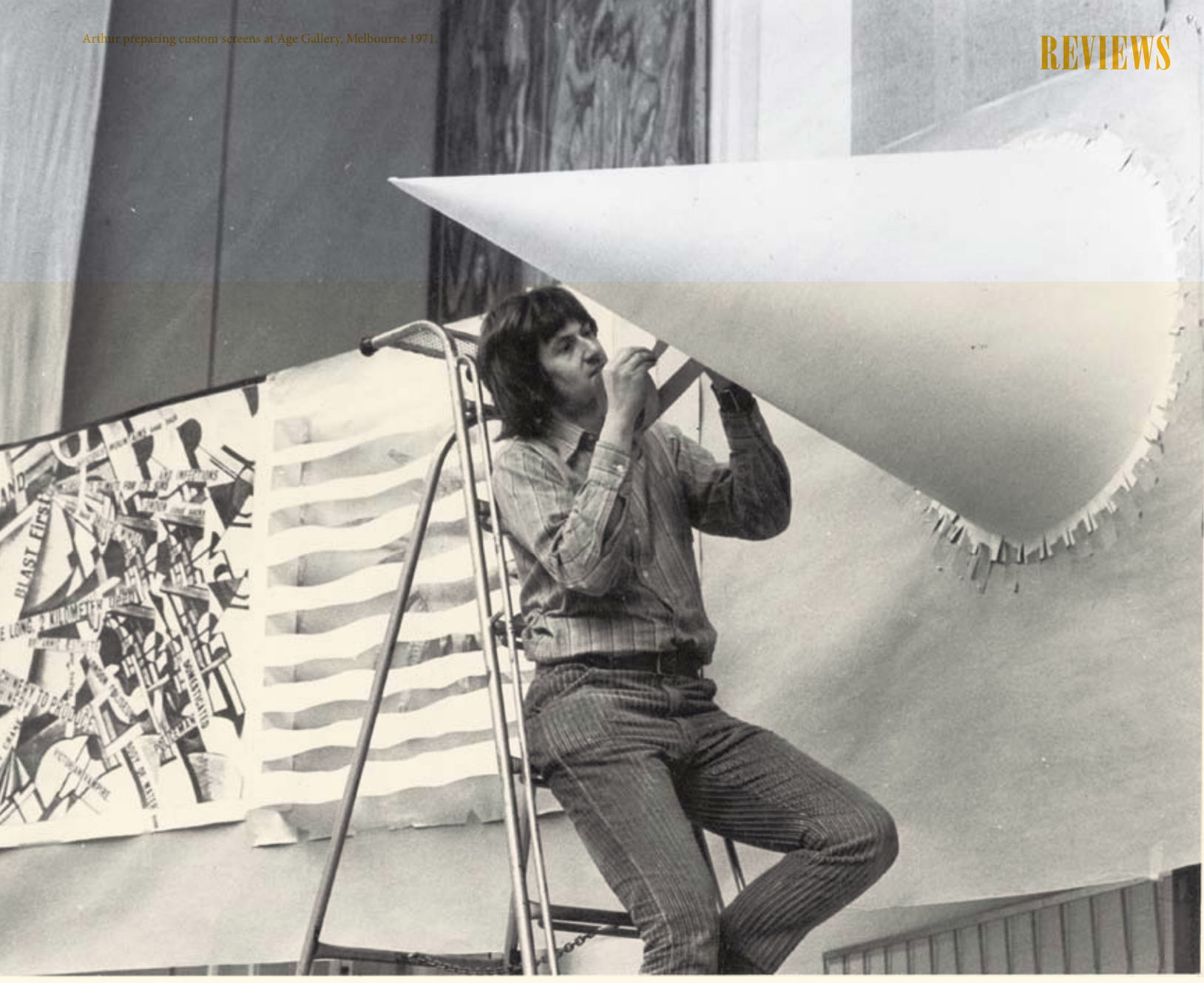
Expanded Cinema is such a historically bound project — born in the 1960s and of a piece with the explosion of experimental film in America, Europe and Australia, 'happenings', and wider countercultural exploration — that it's sometimes hard to conceive of it as truly active (i.e. risk-taking, creative) in the noughties. If we take Expanded Cinema at its word, then it should still be a voracious beast, incorporating multifarious arts forms (and beyond, into science, mathematics and so on) — but too often Expanded Cinema's imperatives and directives are wilfully misread. The form can take in anything from total multi-sensory bombardment (at its rare best) to bad performance art accompanied by feeble video 'art' and/or installation work.

That Expanded Cinema helped experimental film move into the white cube is another fraught historical complication, and one of my first questions on seeing that the Cantrills were revisiting their *Expanded Cinema* exhibition of 1971, with the support of Melbourne International Film Festival and the intensive organisational and on-ground help of Brisbane's OtherFilm collective, was whether this meant they were 'of the institution' — after all, they're often read as outsiders. Also, contextually, I am most comfortable with OtherFilm when they are at their most punk rock and non-establishment — a tacit reminder of Terry Eagleton's line extended from Walter Benjamin's thought that 'it is the lowly and inconspicuous who will blast history apart'.

The Cantrills aim to provide a total, or at least highly immersive, environment. At the Carlton Courthouse the audience entered the venue by passing through several layers of gauze upon which was projected the film *Nebulae and Galaxy*. The Courthouse's seating arrangement implied a formality that seemed slightly at odds with the freedom of the *Cantrills' Expanded Cinema* aesthetic; throughout the evening the audience paid their respects without showing too much enthusiasm (maybe that's a Melbourne thing).

The first part of the screening presented films projected onto a variety of altered screens — a cone, a silver disc, steam from boiling jugs, a grid screen, collage screen, and so on — and these proved to be some of the evening's most powerful works. *Nine Image Film*'s use of a light bulb as part of the screening apparatus drew attention to both the fundamental of film practice (light) while offering a kind of alienation effect to audience members, all in a rather structural/materialist manner (shades of Malcolm LeGrice's *Castle One*). *Punched Film*, where holes punched in film stock flashed against the cone screen, drew attention to the very material of the filmic experience while disrupting the standard mode of projection (onto a flat, rectangular screen) that still limits most experimental film.

Not everything was successful, of course. The program lapsed slightly as it moved into the three-screen projection section of the evening. Multiple projections require an incredibly keen eye to keep them from merely revelling in the 'sheer possibility' of the three screens and, rather, coherently *using* those possibilities to articulate something different about the experience of film and projection. *The City*'s drilling in and out of its namesake's visual representation — from large structures, deeper into the city's core, to footage of a factory worker, and then back out again — was interesting, but did not make particularly potent use of its triple-screen format. Toward the end of the program, however, with *4000 Frames*, the three screens started to really make sense — here an aesthetic of bombardment (an image per frame) was multiplied, enveloping



Arthur preparing custom screens at Age Gallery, Melbourne 1971.

the viewer. The effect was disquieting — the pure rush of imagery sublimated the image to phenomena and the viewer ended up twisted by contrasts of light and dark, challenging the desire for meaning-making. The Cantrills' interest in non- or anti-narrative film, privileging both 'film art' and the play of light over the unfolding of a story, reached its apogee here.

Cantrills' Expanded Cinema ended with *Calligraphy Contest For The New Year*, possibly one of the Cantrills' most powerful pieces, simply through the methodical, almost programmatic nature of the work. A film was projected onto a black screen, which was then painted white by Arthur Cantrill, the paint 'exposing' the film. Toward the end, he moved behind the painted screen and cut away at it, thus exposing a second screen. There was a lovely physicality to the performance that, again, drew attention to the limits of the traditional mode of projection — here, film and filmmaker were intrinsically active participants.

If I held any misgivings about this screening, it was the Cantrills' desire to 'make new' by incorporating updated music by Jack Quigley. While Quigley's contributions were passable, they lacked the inventiveness of Arthur Cantrill's original sound mixes, which almost accidentally seemed to birth a peculiarly rough and appealing form of Australian musique concrète or electroacoustics. Quigley's music, by comparison, sometimes did little more than self-consciously mirror the visual content through audio slurry. The Cantrills are living artists, but their Expanded Cinema is fixed in time — the Hendrix-inspired, playfully psychedelic *Milky Way Special* captures its era at the very moment it finds itself bound by its temporality. Sometimes, things work better that way.

This restaging of the *Cantrills' Expanded Cinema* was a qualified success that nonetheless posed one significant, troubling question. While OtherFilm and MIFF are to be applauded for their desire to redress a certain lacking in our collective filmic historical consciousness, one unfortunate side effect of the Cantrills' appearance was to lead one to wonder where their modern day Australian equivalents are hiding. This is something that OtherFilm have tried to address with their festivals in Brisbane, which combine recognition of key predecessors (the Cantrills, Dirk De Bruyn) with exposition of current artists. But I can't help but feel that this event would have been rather more provocative, in the long term, if the Cantrills' work had been allowed to breathe within a wider context, alongside current examples of expanded cinema from Australia — if, indeed, there are any who are up to the task.

I also wonder how clearly our culture's seemingly unrelenting desire to re-present historical and/or canonical works for the second or third time signifies a creative impasse at the heart of modern filmic practice. Respect is due to the Cantrills for their pioneering creativity, which should stand 'as it was' as an object lesson in how the past sometimes does things very right. But if the ideas contained in their work are to motivate new artists, there needs to be visible examples of interface that move beyond simple organisational engagement. Imagine if you held an Expanded Cinema event and nobody came…

Jon Dale writes about music and film for *Uncut*, *Dusted* and *Signal To Noise*, amongst others.

In my mind I know what I think, but that's only based on my experience

Andrew Liversidge

13–30 May 2009
TCB art inc, Melbourne

Text: Mark Feary

Value. Intrinsic value. Proffered value. Forecasted value. Andrew Liversidge's recent project confronts, questions and irks aspects of art's problematically symbiotic relationship to value economies. Estranged from the presentation of something produced, this is a gesture of something borrowed. It indicates risk, in terms of the financial liability invested in the initial production of the work, coupled with the risk of maintaining the integrity of what is arguably a fragile assemblage. Yet ironically it also denotes an element of risk aversion, through the effective cost neutrality of the work in terms of its ready propensity for liquidity.

The proposition in simple terms is a ten thousand dollar bank loan taken out by the artist to produce an art project; a work featuring a formal cube composed of ten thousand dollar coins. The resultant project is then exhibited for a period of three weeks at an artist-run space situated in an alleyway replete with junkies and sex shops. The choice of space is fitting not only in terms of its straight-forward cube-like architecture, but also, and pertinently, in relation to the name of the space. What better context within which to present the mechanism and objective of the financial sector than a space titled TCB (Taking Care of Business)?

The formal structure of this 'sculpture' belies the complexity of the issues posited within the work and more widely within artistic praxis. What does one invest in a practice, financially and temporally? And how do such returns weigh in against expenditure? To clarify the situation further, this is not a Koons-esque work by an ex-stockbroker or the like, for whom the financial investment required to produce the work would pose little economic concern. To be certain, this is a relatively significant sum of money for one unaccustomed to stashing a backpack containing a bounty of gold under the mattress.

The project renders abstractly the limits of production values within market speculative contemporary art, wherein the often banal requisites of finish and attention to detail, regardless of how superficial, infer intrinsic, perpetual and cumulative

fiscal value and potential. Where within this permeating realm does the value of concept, gesture, or defiance lie? Indeed, what could be considered the liability of a product that maintains a cost neutrality in its material form?

This project is a gesture toward the performative, albeit one that dispenses with the performer. Yet it is also one that dispenses with the object, insofar as post-exhibition the project retains no physical form, in that the material can be readily and expediently exchanged. This transference however, elicits neither waste nor remnant; it is merely converted into a more convenient form of legal tender. Unlike much of the canon of minimalism, the object retains no innate form, no physical legacy, however simple the construction may be, either made or appropriated by the artist. Through this, Liversidge confronts the idea of gesture as object, and the paraphernalia such acts often elicit. Perhaps more akin to a Tino Sehgal performance, the stack assumes the role of an actor, fully complicit during the course of the exhibition, yet entirely liberated upon its conclusion, a performative gesture seeking to evade the pervasive capital value systems commonplace within the visual arts.

The project nods to René Descartes, yet it tempers such homage with doubt, indeed almost inadequacy. It recognises the tribute, but is careful not to advance beyond it, observing the philosophical propositions suggested by Descartes while imbuing them with an existentialist inadequacy that waivers under the legacy of Descartes' almost incontestable intellectuality. Descartes' quote of 1637 'Je pense donc je suis'[1] is the reference from which the project's title derives, replacing the oft cited *I think, therefore I am*, as it has most commonly been interpreted through its translation into English, with the infinitely more reticent *In my mind I know what I think, but that's only based on my experience.* Furthermore, the very constellation of Liversidge's project draws upon some of the philosopher's elaborations on the concept of abstraction. Descartes suggested that any quantity beyond ten thousand enters into the realm of pure abstraction, and as such is beyond the parameters of the human imagination in a readily tangible sense. In so doing the work is positioned at the precipice of the comprehendible and theoretical, manifesting as a kind of physical representation of abstraction.

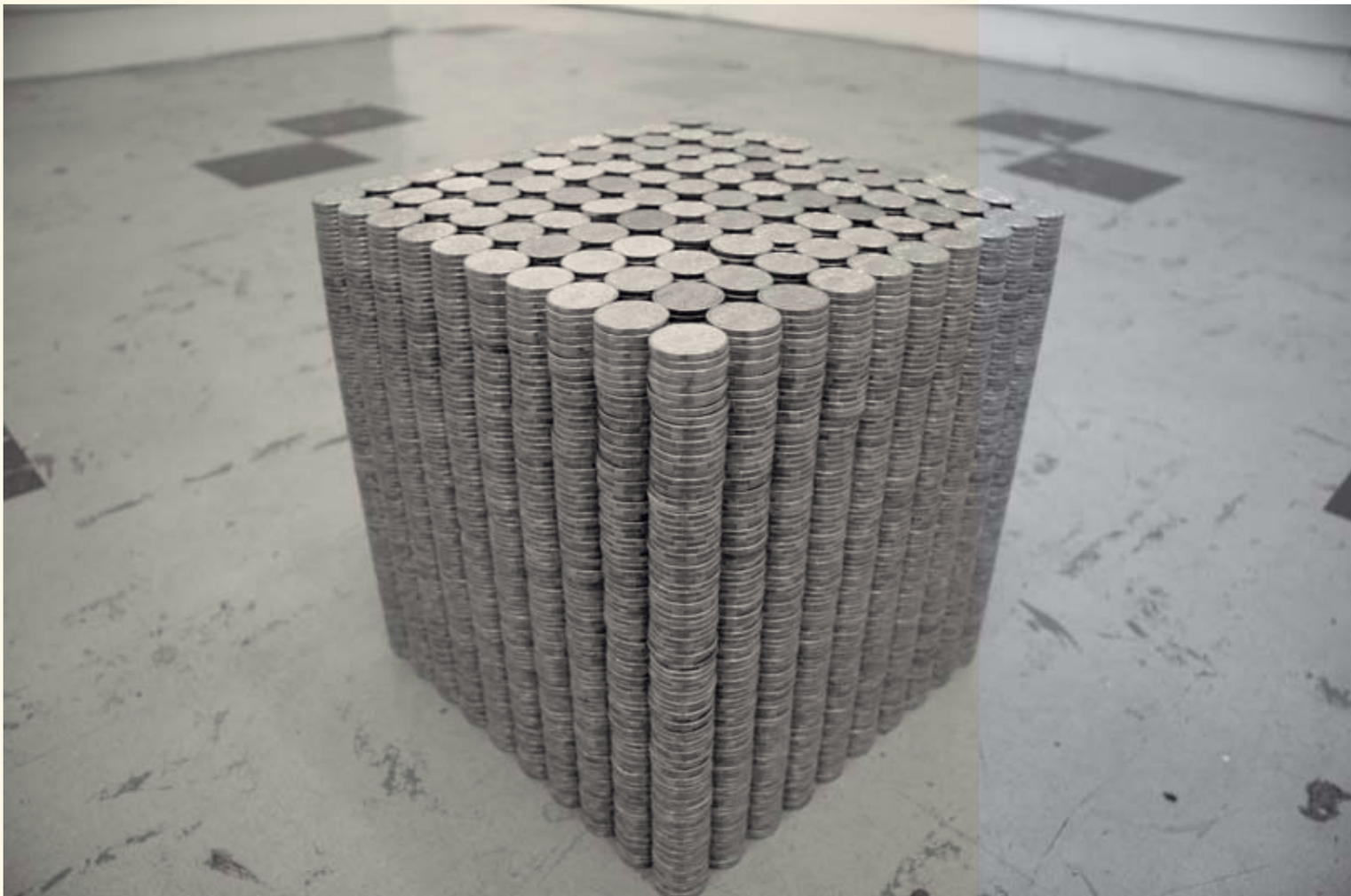
This show concludes like the aftermath of a performance by an impotent Vito Acconci; with the absence of any trace or physical form, yet leaving you sure that someone has somehow just tried to fuck with you. Herein lies the gravity of the gesture, a performance without the performative, an object that retains no form, and an investment that poses no financial liability.

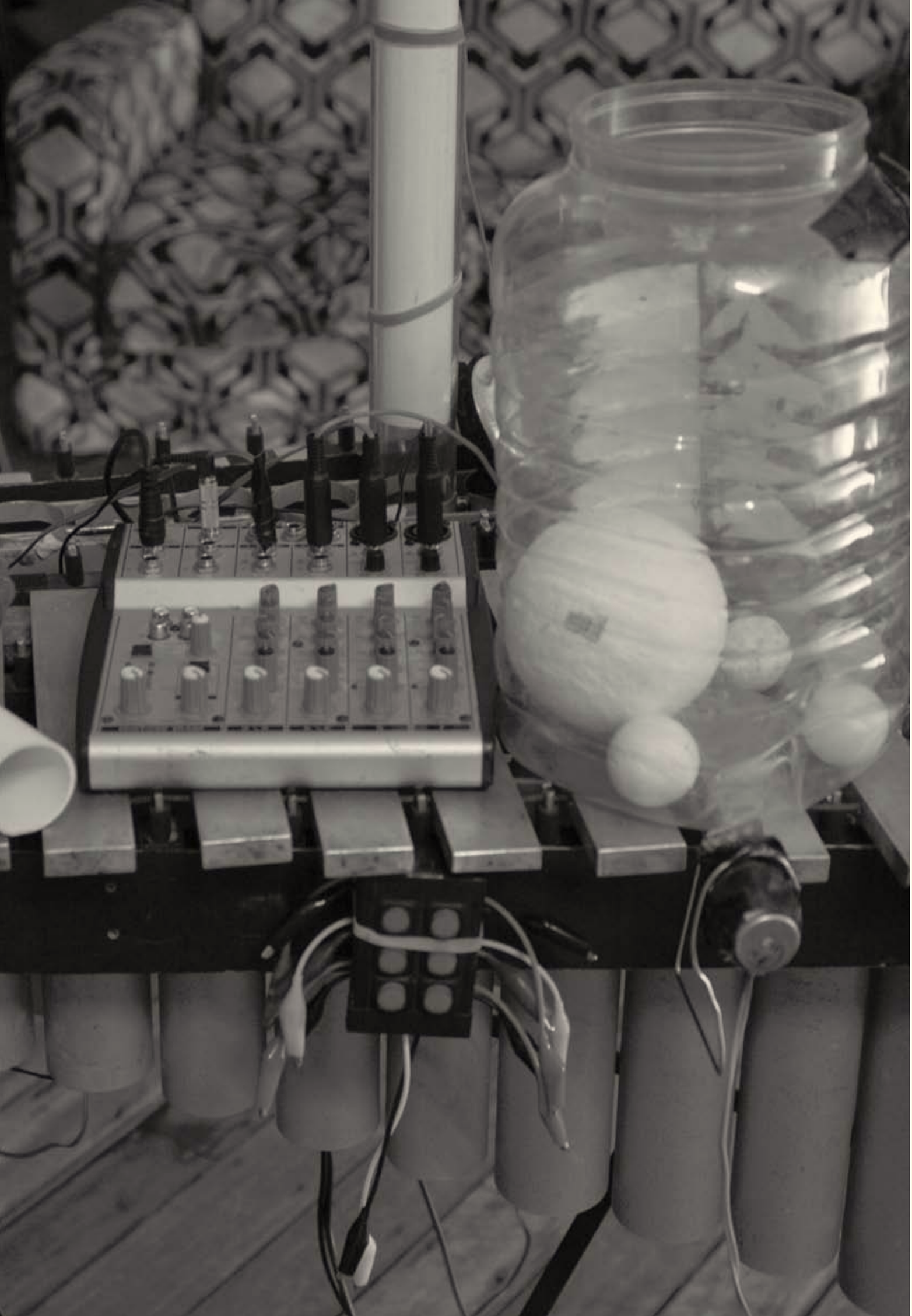
Mark Feary is a Melbourne-based curator and writer.

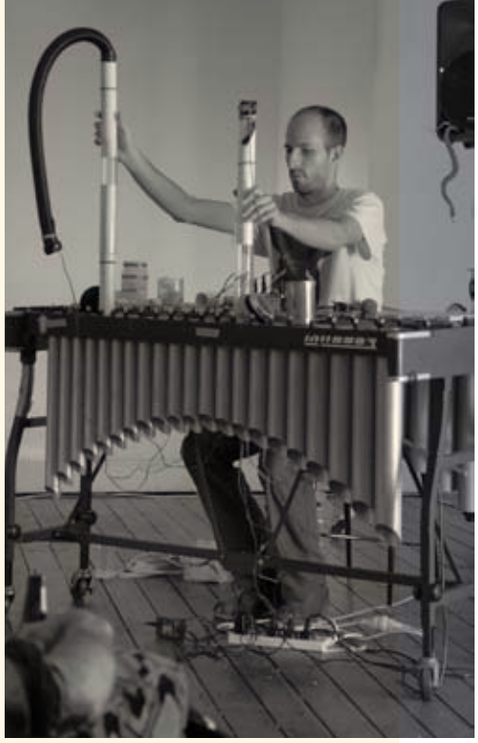
Endnotes

1 René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, 1637. This book was originally published in French. The widely quoted 'Cogito ergo sum' first appeared in the later *Principles of Philosophy*, 1644.

2 Ibid.







Found Sound performance

Joe Talia and Dale Gorfinkel

Found Sound: The Experimental Instrument Project
Curated by Amelia Douglas and Albert Mishriki
Performance at Tape Projects

18 February 2009

Text: Rod Cooper

A quick climb up the short narrow staircase into the exhibition space used by Tape Projects, one of Melbourne's most exciting artist-run initiatives, and I'm greeted by smiling faces and an air of expectation. The atmosphere is relaxed, open and comfortable.

At the north end of the space Dale Gorfinkel and Joe Talia have a juxtaposed set-up. Joe's arrangement of carefully selected sonic objects is sparse, while Dale's is the most elaborate extension of a traditional vibraphone that you will see anywhere on the planet. Joe's set-up comprises a spring reverb unit and small percussion objects, a cymbal, and a bow. The table seems too large. Not so long ago his set up was a single cymbal, bowed.

Dale's extension of the vibraphone began many moons ago, long before his move in 2008 from Sydney to Melbourne. Since then he has been a constant figure of the Melbourne avant-garde gig circuit, as both performer and organiser of sonic events. One never quite knows what Dale will do next; over the years I have seen him break the vibraphone down into its bare essentials, removing the bulk, only to remake and retune the keys to subtle *just* intonations. There was a time when he carried only the motor and tremolo axle to gigs, somehow managing to create sounds from nothing. This has certainly been one of the distinguishing features of his diverse playing style. The motor has become a liberating force, freeing him from the constraints of a traditional instrument. Found Sound proved to be no exception.

The vibraphone dissolves under the bewildering adaptation of agricultural pipes, plus other extensions, that rise above the performers' heads. By dropping ping-pong balls into the pipes, Dale sends them gurgling down to another aperture suspended just in the right position above motorised apparatus, creating continuous soft vibrations. The balls rattle in constant motion. He doesn't let these sounds go on for too long, moving to the next gesture before we have time to get bored. There is a skill in imbuing these sustained textures with enough variation to keep the taxpayer happy.

Joe's performance also reveals his ability to do just enough without labouring the point. He uses sounds efficiently, placing them at a time he knows is right. The spring reverb unit is compact in size, but huge in resonance; this restraint communicates a quiet confidence without the embellishment of ego. Both these performers have that quiet approach. Stage presence isn't everything, but presence of sound is and neither of them overdo it.

Driving home on the freeway after the show, I was happy to have forgotten most of the music with only the memory of the sounds themselves popping back into my mind. A resistance to form identifiable phrases and motifs seems to me to be a typical peculiarity of Australian sound art over the past five years. The residue is what remains.

Joe's precarious placement of the cymbal at the edge of the table, gripped to withstand the forces of bowing, but held without dampening the vibrations. Dale's squeaks of styrofoam rubbed by the polished shaft of a motor. I don't want to go home with a riff or tune in my head; I just want the pure sounds freed from the structural constraints of composition. The performers' gestures cement the memory of the sound. It's not the APRA song contest (thank goodness), it's sound art at the cost of a small donation.

Rod Cooper is a sound artist and performer based in Melbourne.

Dale Gorfinkel and Joe Talia
Performance still
Photography: Helen Metzger

Sonia Leber and David Chesworth
Space-Shifter (installation views) 2009
Photography: Christo Crocker
Image courtesy the artists and Conical Inc

Space-Shifter

Sonia Leber and David Chesworth

23 May – 13 June 2009
Conical inc, Melbourne

Text: Jared Davis

It wasn't difficult to become immersed in the singular experience of Sonia Leber and David Chesworth's *Space-Shifter*. The installation was by nature exactly that, *experiential*, and in it sound articulated every inch of Conical gallery. With sheets of metal strewn about, the site was filled with the sounds of recorded, bodiless voices. Guttural growls, blowing noises, gasps, hisses; all worked to create a sense of energy that, upon entering the gallery, was impossible to feel physically disconnected from. Conical's floor vibrated, sheets of steel rattled, sound filled the walls — the high level of sonic detail meant my attention to sound was so heightened that soon both the rustling of the ceiling's insulation and the exterior traffic noises outside the gallery became a part of the installation. It was an intriguing physical event, one that left me wanting to know more, not about any interpretive meaning, but rather a grasping of my own psychological responses to the work.

Sonia Leber and David Chesworth have produced numerous large-scale — in terms of both physicality and public access — sonic installation works. There is an element to the medium of sound that resonates (figuratively) with a widely disparate audience; its presence as a physical ether, its potential to powerfully express without being didactic, and its inevitable referencing of each listener's own sonic memories and psyche. In *Space-Shifter*, voices were constantly present, but bodiless, they appeared alive and organic yet were inseparable as entities from the material of their surroundings. The piece was a series of *acousmatic* events — that is, an instance of sound presented detached from its known source, in this case the human body, through the use of recording. Acousmatic sound is (and has been for some

time) a developed language in itself, with its psychological implications and suggestive capabilities grown through decades of recorded sound theory. Its lineage traces early cinema sound and *musique concrète*, as well as the legacies of these forms (French cinema theorist Michel Chion's *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* is one example of a key text exploring the use and potential of acousmatic sound). As listeners we are very sophisticated in understanding recorded sound; we are not so easily fooled into presuming that because we hear a 'real life' sound there must be a real life source connected to it. We can identify recorded sounds as 'sound objects' in themselves, containing new characteristics and linguistic connotations that may not have existed at the time of recording.

What was more interesting in *Space-Shifter* was how old ideas were renewed through seamless execution. As I approached the stairwell leading up to Conical's gallery space, echoes of Leber and Chesworth's work intrigued me; traces of the recordings were whisked down the stairs — they reverberated and picked up the building's physical characteristics along the way — before evaporating onto the street. The sounds invited visitors upstairs and played on their curiosities. When I entered the gallery these echoes transformed and became wholly immersive through increased volume and clarity, until they finally made null any evidence of their separateness from the space and listener. Material had a heightened presence in *Space-Shifter* and, as such, the visitors themselves became material as they navigated the space. This physical passageway into and around the work was a morphing, experiential spatial composition in itself.

It is important not to disregard the significance of the human voice in understanding our responses to *Space-Shifter*. The voice, like other sounds, is a carrier of language and associations; although the languages expressed by voices have been culturally developed in attempts at objectified communication. As the voice is sourced from humans, when language is lost from its sound, its raw timbre and textural qualities become signifiers implying human expression, life and the body. In *Space-Shifter* the sounds of the human voice are detached from all these things. Even the speakers that play the recordings are completely concealed, and this is another important splice from our expectations of source; in fact, the knowledge that these are truly recordings is solely reliant on our presumptions. Leber and Chesworth's disembodied voices successfully present sound as an object, in a similar way that Pierre Schaeffer did with his *Étude aux Chemins de Fer* in 1948 (a famous *musique concrète* composition, created solely from recordings of trains). Through focused listening, and also through re-presentation, we consider sounds for their physical aspects and become aware of their subconscious or psychoacoustic effect on us as listeners. While Leber and Chesworth are continuing a discussion with a large historical breadth, their *Space-Shifter* also provokes with fresh compositional creativity and material ingenuity, drawing on past discussions of sonic linguistics and 're-speaking' them to make us continually reconsider the physical language of sound.

Jared Davis is a writer, curator, musician and Sub-Editor of *un Magazine* volume 3.

Problem Solving: Espress Yourself

Kain Picken & Rob McKenzie, A Constructed World, Claire Fontaine, Ester Partegas, Jota Castro, Hany Armanious, Steve Carr, Koji Ryui, Raquel Ormella, Pat Foster & Jen Berean, Liv Barrett, Christopher LG Hill, James Deutsher, Matthew Griffin, Renee So, Poklong Anading, Tony Garifalakis, Huseyin Sami, Guy Benfield, Jon Campbell, Ida Ekblad.

Curated by Jarrod Rawlins
14 May – 13 June 2009
Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

Text: Michael Ascroft

Problem Solving, at the very least, proposed a solution to the size restraints of the relocated Uplands Gallery. With so much on display the new space had the atmosphere of a shop or an art fair; an impression of measured clutter that was accentuated by the sculptures themselves. Their shared aesthetic was a kind of enigmatic literalness, which at first seemed to come from the indifference these sculptures have to the fact they are basically stacks and gatherings of ubiquitous stuff. On one of Esther Partegàs's oversized aluminium Post-it notes, which mimic the look of the curled coloured paper squares prevalent on office walls, was the reminder: 'less world'. This read like a founding principle for an artistic ecology, a way of thinking and making aimed to reduce the time, energy and material that goes into the production of art.

Combined with a busy showroom-like presentation, this sense of attenuation and indifference did not exactly make the first encounter with the individual sculptures an intense one. The bewildering centrepiece of the exhibition was Kain Picken and Rob McKenzie's *Espress Yourself (Briony)*, a coffee pot on a rug on a plinth on a coffee table. Likewise, the emoticon happy face by Jota Castro — with its two circular security mirror eyes, double-ended dildo nose and handcuffs for a smile — was menacing, funny and erotic all at once, but the generic form did away with any lasting sentiment. These sculptures are impersonal, even monotonous things to look at, but it is also their lack of manipulation that starts to open them up to wide, vague worlds of association. They begin to feel like concentrated analogues of the restless, directionless boredom that comes from spending too long on the Internet. That is why it is almost a shock that, when taking the exhibition in as a whole, the accumulation of this effect becomes almost overwhelming.

Yet the elements that make up these sculptures are not simply ubiquitous. They do not operate as representations of mass production or as readymades — both these terms are too narrow because '[t]o produce sculpture is sometimes merely to notice it, to find it, usually not in the museum'.[1] The point is that the choice of a particular element that will go on to become part of a sculpture looks like a choice made from a limitless supply of other potential elements. And the sculptural form itself — a revived form of assemblage — points towards this background. They represent this possibility by simply being themselves.

These principles also inform the curatorial approach of Uplands Director Jarrod Rawlins. He states that, *Problem Solving* is 'a personal/private act rather than a didactic one', aimed at removing the 'moral and intellectual instruction implicit in many group exhibitions'.[2] What remains is an exhibition unashamedly organised to the tune of the Director's taste, which promotes some of the Uplands stable. In other words, the curator speaks through the exhibition about what being a commercial gallery is all about.

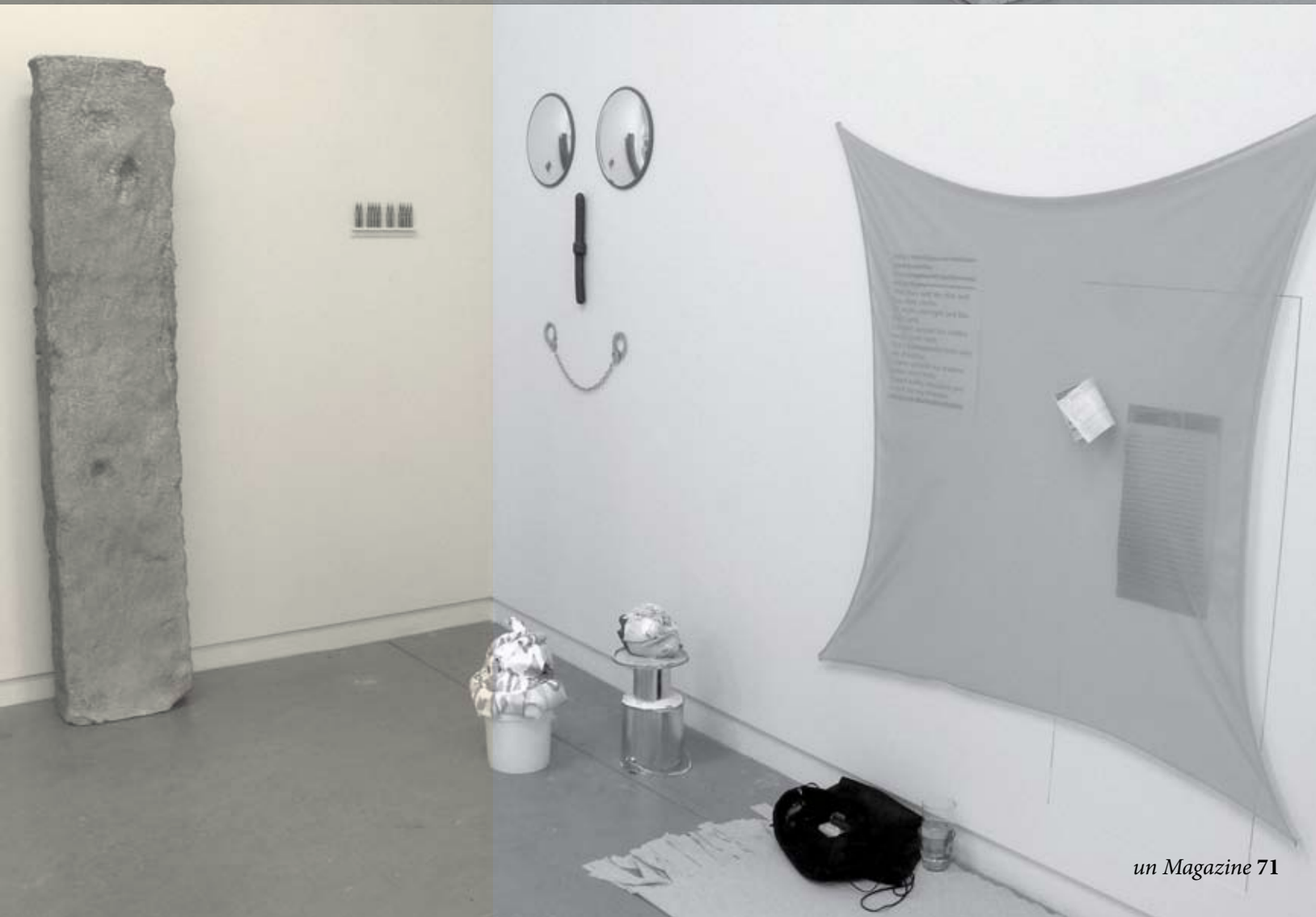
Problem Solving echoed the survey exhibition *Unmonumental*, held at the New Museum in New York in 2007-08. (Both exhibitions were also the first in new locations.) By focusing on the loose, provisional sculpture being produced by several generations of artists, it seems to have been, and continues to be, the stimulus for a range of new activity in a similar area. Unlike the neutrality of *Problem Solving*, however, the curatorial agenda of *Unmonumental* was didactic. According to the curators, this kind of art making is nothing if not a response to a contemporary world characterised by environmental crisis, a deeply disengaged citizenry, excessive consumerism and hopeless inequality. In the exhibition catalogue for *Unmonumental*, Massimiliano Gioni states that this 'art of recycling … suggests a universe on the verge of being completely overtaken by refuse'.[3]

A real and prescient form of this universe of refuse is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Consisting of plastic junk dumped from ships and waste sucked out by tides from rivers, storm drains and sewage systems, then drawn together by the movement of rotating ocean currents, the Garbage Patch is a semi-buoyant amorphous object 'at least as big as Texas',[4] off the west coast of North America. Clumps of shopping bags, food wrapping, tyres, bottle caps, dental floss, bath toys, cigarette lighters and so on, are the elements of this grand assemblage, created by everyone and no one. But then the power of the attenuated, open aesthetic captured in *Problem Solving* and *Unmonumental* is not only a result of its ecological colouring, or its simplicity and apparent effortlessness. It is also a sensitivity to an obscure contemporary feeling, something vast but shallow, like the trash floating on the surface of the sea.

Michael Ascroft is a Melbourne-based artist and writer.

Endnotes

1 John Kelsey, 'Sculpture in an Abandoned Field' in *Rachel Harrison: If I did it*, Jrp Ringier, Zurich, 2007, p. 123.
2 Jarrod Rawlins, exhibition text, available at http://www.uplandsgallery.com/exhibitions/14-may-2009.
3 Massimiliano Gioni, 'Ask the dust' from *Unmonumental* exhibition catalogue, New Museum/Phaidon Press Inc., New York: 2007, p. 75.
4 Donovan Hohn, 'Sea of Trash', *New York Times Magazine*, 6/22/08 available at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/22/magazine/22Plastics-t.html?pagewanted=7&_r=2.



Next Wave Time Lapse

New screen-based work by young emerging artists

Every Thursday, 5:30–6:30pm
June 2009 – May 2010
Federation Square, Melbourne

Review: Maura Edmond

Eric Bridgeman
Gayer Than All the Rest 2009
Video still

Federation Square is a conflicted site. For much of the time it is a commercial event space, but it is also a place to linger for free in a CBD almost entirely devoid of open spaces and where people gather to protest and to participate collectively in special occasions (like the broadcast of Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations). The large screens that dominate the square are just as problematic. They display a lot of advertising, a lot of commercial television and a lot of sport, but increasingly they are also exhibiting contemporary art and media.

In June 2009 Next Wave launched *Time Lapse*, a year-long program of newly commissioned, site-specific works by twelve young Australian artists which takes advantage of Federation Square's various multimedia spaces but primarily its urban screens. For curator Ulanda Blair and many of the artists involved, the importance of screening contemporary art at Federation Square is twofold. It is both a means to introduce young contemporary artists to a very large audience who might not ordinarily come into contact with contemporary Australian art (and vice versa), and to take critical aim at some of the difficulties, shortcomings and idiosyncrasies of Federation Square as a public space. Says Blair, 'it's about giving young artists a platform for far more exposure than they would usually be given … but also thinking about the use of the space, how the public engages with that space normally, and referencing and subverting that'.

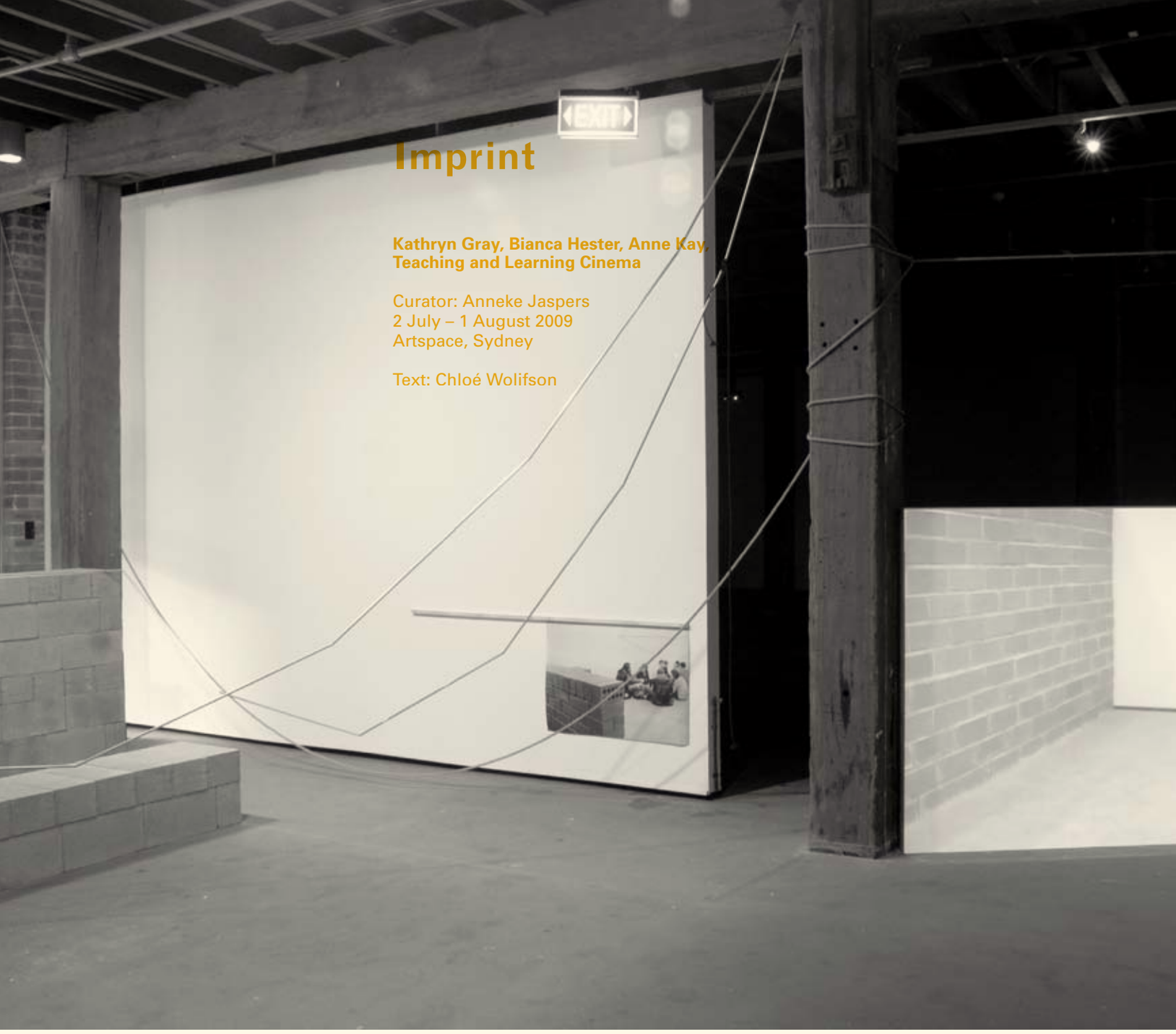
Two artworks that comment explicitly on Federation Square's role as a public space, albeit in very different ways, are Queensland artist Eric Bridgeman's bombastic *Gayer Than All the Rest* which opened *Time Lapse*, and *Straight to the Art* by Victorian artist group X:MACHINE (Olivia Crang and Jarrod Factor) which will screen in November. *Gayer Than All the Rest* is a grotesque performance video in which Bridgeman and his cohorts perform as camp and deformed caricatures of Australian popular culture. In particular, he satirises the clichés of sporty masculinity, playing on the inherent queerness of men groping each other in tiny rugby shorts to Tina Turner anthems. Bridgeman does not typically see his work offering a specific social commentary, stating: 'I'm not really trying to comment or "say" anything. It's more about a presentation of visual ideas'. *Gayer Than All The Rest* belongs to a body of work that he has been developing for several years, but in the move from a conventional gallery setting to Federation Square it took on new and somewhat unpredictable qualities. Although essentially a single channel video work, exhibited in a highly public and hybrid space *Gayer Than All the Rest* inevitably became situational, shifting and changing according to audiences and contexts (in particular, resonating with the allegations of violence and drug abuse levelled at a number of football players just prior to the exhibition). This loss of hermeneutic control seemed appropriate for Bridgeman's chaotic romp.

X:MACHINE's *Straight to the Art* will be an interactive video that utilises Federation Square's SMS TV technology. The work's video interface will feature a cyborg who will respond to 'status update' messages that the public are invited to SMS to the screen. It will look like it's an automated imitation of human emotions but, as Crang explains, 'It's not actually an artificial intelligence that is taking key words from the text messages and aligning those with visual responses. The artists will be doing that … it's the old *Wizard of Oz*, man behind the curtain'. *Straight to the Art* is an exploration of the relationship between performance and technology — contrasting 'new' media technologies with an old-fashioned 'smoke and mirrors' magic trick. It is also an ironic commentary on the public nature of Federation Square, drawing attention to the more genuinely public virtual space of the Internet and online social networking sites.

Federation Square's three urban screens are huge and costly pieces of infrastructure that were built with seemingly little thought at the time as to how they might be used in the long term, or at least with little ongoing funding set aside for serious programming. As a result they have become pieces of elaborate audiovisual equipment for events and, outside of the events, advertising billboards. Partnering with arts and cultural organisations like Next Wave is a necessity, in part because it provides Federation Square with access to artists and curatorial concepts it is not sufficiently resourced to research and program itself. More importantly, it gives artists access to a high profile and important piece of public infrastructure that can and should have the same level of access and openness as other public facilities like parks, libraries, broadband, streets and swimming pools. In doing so it reminds audiences and artists alike of the public-ness of Federation Square, a point sometimes forgotten amid the sponsorship logos and commercial TV.

Maura Edmond is an arts writer and PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne's School of Culture and Communication.

All quotes are from interviews conducted by the author in July and August 2009.



Imprint

Kathryn Gray, Bianca Hester, Anne Kay, Teaching and Learning Cinema

Curator: Anneke Jaspers
2 July – 1 August 2009
Artspace, Sydney

Text: Chloé Wolifson

Pushing open the door to Artspace, the visitor to *Imprint* was immediately forced to physically engage with Bianca Hester's work *Enabling Constraints* (2009). An installation of Besser brick walls was surrounded by a tangle of ropes strung with thin aluminium pipes, forming angular divisions in the space. Accompanying photographic and video documentation functioned as records of Hester's previous works but also as instructions for the viewer, ensuring the ongoing translation of these ephemeral pieces long after their original occurrence. It was this continuation that curator Anneke Jaspers sought to investigate in *Imprint*, along with the potential for what Jaspers termed the 'material residues of ephemeral practice'[1] to become the means for the regeneration of works that — in their performative element — had become lost to time.

Jaspers acknowledges that 'embodied engagement is subject to the filtering and fixing effects of representational modes'. Hester and the other artists in *Imprint* showed an awareness of this vulnerability through the multi-layered construction of their works. Kathryn Gray's piece *Contingency plan* (2009) turned live interviews into script into performance into video. There was trickery in its presentation, which also echoed two of her choices for interview subjects — a magician and a private investigator. The identity of the subjects and the reality of the situations depicted were presented with dramatic paradox (using subtle visual plays like misplaced shadows, mismatched reflections and staggered subtitles which did not completely concur with the lips of the muted subjects). In this media and image saturated time when even popular reality television shows are widely acknowledged and accepted to be highly directed and staged, Gray's work presented original information as well as interpretations and manipulations of it, but crucially, gave the audience the opportunity to unfold the work and discover further dimensions to its imprint.

Anne Kay's *Unhistorical Facts* (2009), an arrangement of documentation relating to Aleks Danko's 1975 performance *Day to Day* had the artist acting as a conduit, bringing recollections of Danko's work together in an almost museological setting. In *Day to Day* the artist was gagged, blindfolded and bound to a chair for an hour at six different locations and times. In *Unhistorical Facts*, a visitor could learn about it through facsimiles of the artist's notebooks, photographs, audio recollections and posthumous video of the performance sites, however the implied intensity and immediacy of a performance such as *Day to day* is difficult to experience through these means. With Kay's influence residing in the research and presentation of information rather than an overt contemporary re-interpretation, *Unhistorical Facts* seemed nostalgic.

Teaching and Learning Cinema (TLC), meanwhile, showed a reverence for the past but brought a record of the performance up to date. The transience of performance was recognised through TLC's project, a re-enactment of Expanded Cinema practitioner Guy Sherwin's 1976 piece *Man with Mirror*, as well as an accompanying brochure on how to perform the

work. In her exhibition statement Jaspers stated that 'an imprint is always relative, a contingent reference to something someplace else'.[2] This was quite literally shown through displacement of reflected images in *(Wo)man with Mirror* (2009). A Super 8 projection of the artist performing with a mirror (originally Sherwin but re-filmed for this work with TLC's Louise Curham and Lucas Ihlein) was superimposed onto the performer as they repeated the filmed actions with the mirror, reflecting and refracting the image onto themselves, each other, the audience and the space. TLC's was the work in the show to most prominently celebrate the act of performance as something to be perpetuated as well as archived, and their enthusiasm for the project translated through to make *(Wo)man with Mirror* the most vibrant contribution to *Imprint* despite the relatively modest technologies employed in its presentation.

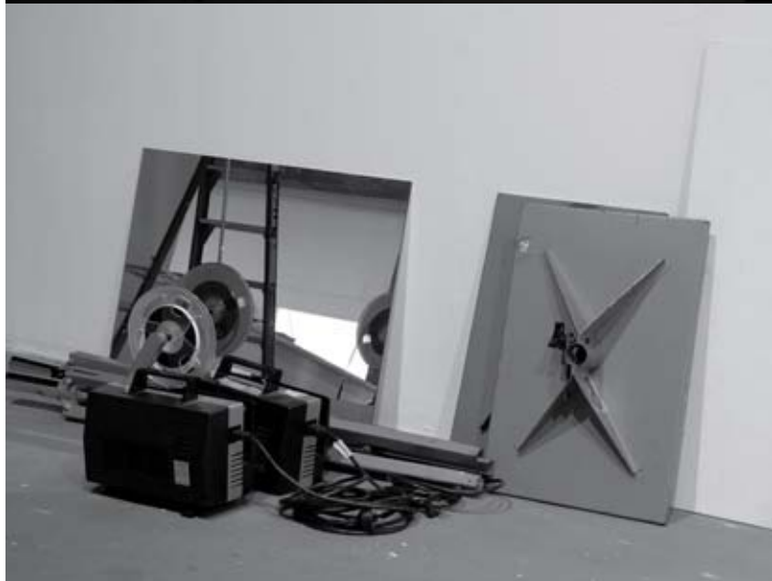
If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? If a performance artwork happened and no trace remains, did it really exist? The works in *Imprint* responded admirably to this dilemma, translating ephemeral practices into cogent new works. However the absence of the original acts left a deafening silence, so that perhaps the exhibition's greatest affirmation was that there is still definitely a place for process-based and performance work in contemporary Australian art.

Chloé Wolifson is an art administrator and writer living in Sydney.

Endnotes

1 Anneke Jaspers, curator statement *Imprint* exhibition flyer, 2009.

2 Jaspers, ibid.



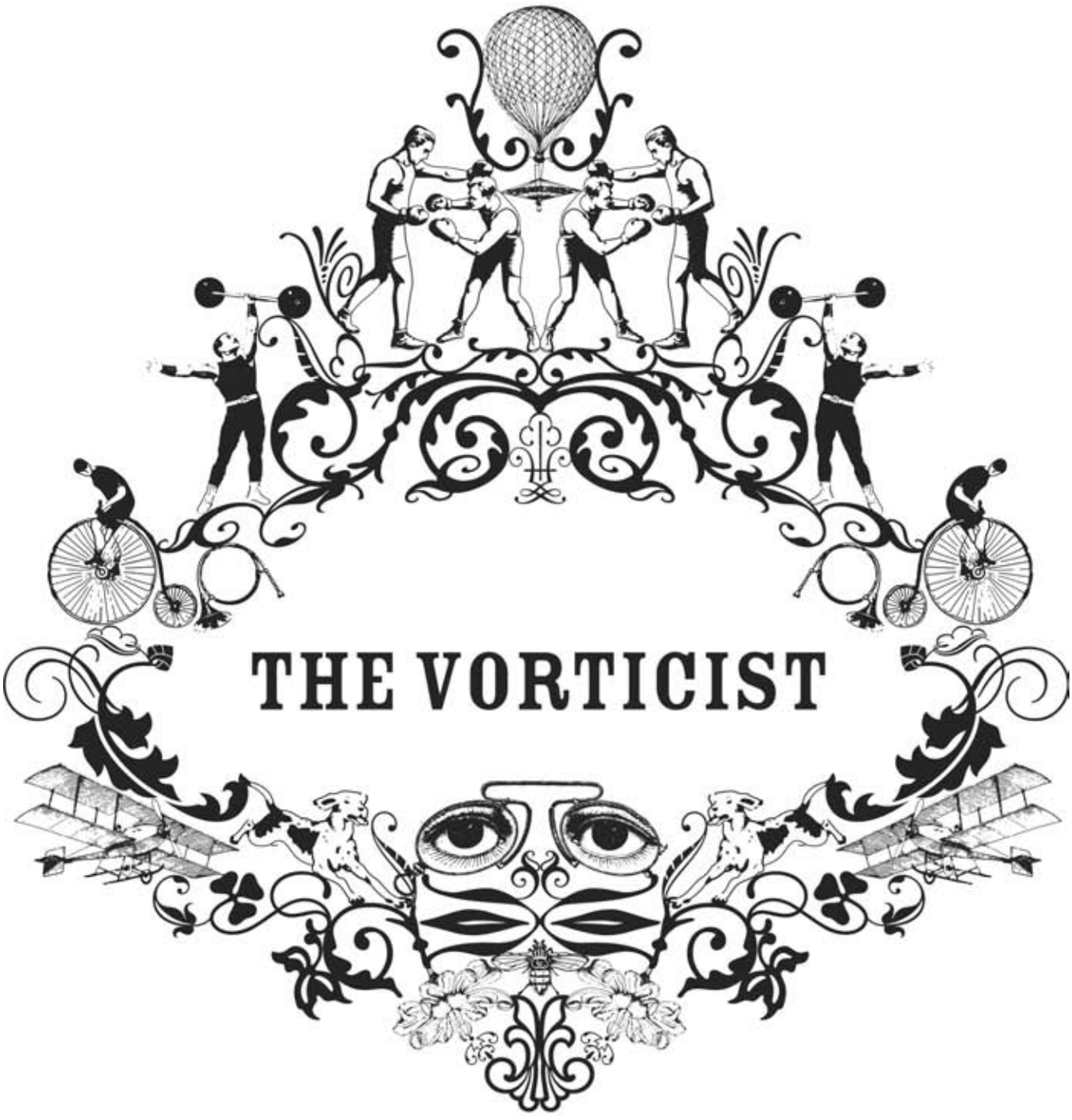
(above)
Bianca Hester
Enabling Constraints 2009
Installation view

(top right)
Anne Kay
Unhistorical Facts 2009
Installation view

(middle right)
Kathryn Gray
Contingency Plan 2009
Installation view

(bottom right)
Teaching and Learning Cinema (Louise Curham and Lucas Ihlein)
(Wo)man with Mirror 2009
Installation view

Photography: Silversalt



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